

Confession

Metropolitan Anthony (Krapovitsky)

A Series of Lectures on the Mystery of Repentance.

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Translator's Introduction.

Metropolitan Anthony (1863-1936) is best known as the organizer and first primate of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. Even before the Russian revolution he was well known as a theologian and bishop. After being rector of the Moscow and Kazan Theological Academies, in 1900 he was consecrated Bishop of Ufa; in 1902 he was transferred to the Volynia diocese in the western Ukraine, and then in 1914 he was made Archbishop of Kharkov. In his theological writings he stressed primarily the moral implications of Christian doctrine. He fought against the influence of western scholasticism and stressed the need to turn to the Church Fathers for theological inspiration. As a bishop he also fought against all anti-canonical and un-Orthodox tendencies of Church life, in 1918 he was appointed Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich, and after the revolution, as the senior of the exiled bishops, he was chosen to head the Russian Church Abroad. He kept the exile Church on the path of strict Orthodoxy, both in refusing to accept Metropolitan Sergei's declaration of loyalty to the atheistic Soviet state, and also in opposing all kinds of theological modernism. This modernism was the chief cause of the sad schisms which divided the exile Church and which grieved Metropolitan Anthony very deeply.

The keynote of Metropolitan Anthony's personal life, as of his theology, was love. He unhesitatingly gave away his personal possessions and the income he received as a bishop. He was a spiritual abba of countless people, including almost a whole generation of monks and bishops. Many testify to his enormous spiritual experience, manifested in the guidance they received from him. Among these is Metropolitan Philaret, the present primate of the Russian Church Abroad. While he was a young priest monk in China he corresponded with Metropolitan Anthony and preserved as a precious treasure for many years the letters he received; he refers to Metropolitan Anthony as the "abba of all abbats." Vladika Anthony was also granted the gift of tears during prayer: it was said that all one had to do was look at him praying in church in order to be enflamed with prayer oneself.

The present work, *Confession*, is based on the lectures Vladika Anthony gave during his courses on pastoral theology, but it was actually written down in 1920, while he was temporarily confined in a Uniate monastery in western Russia, due to the circumstances of the Civil War. It is primarily a manual for priests, written to show them how to give spiritual advice and help during confession, and gives great insight into the various ways in which the passions afflict the human soul. It is precisely this struggle, and, with the help of God's grace, gradual victory, which is, in the view of Vladika Anthony, the feature distinguishing Orthodoxy from all other religions — the very essence of Orthodoxy (see his "How does Orthodoxy differ from the Western Denominations?" in *Orthodox Life*, 1970, No. 2). Although it is addressed to priests, it is obviously of great value to all Orthodox Christians, who are engaged in this struggle (with the exception of chapters 2-5). There are already many books about spiritual life, such as the *Philokalia* and St. John Climacus's *Ladder*, but these often go over the heads of contemporary lay-people, as they are written primarily for monks, who are generally able to give more attention to their spiritual life. The special value of Metropolitan Anthony's *Confession* is that it deals with such problems as are familiar to most contemporary Orthodox lay people, but which are not treated elsewhere. Although it was written over fifty years ago it is still remarkably relevant to modern life, although of course there are also new problems that have arisen in the last few decades and are not covered by it. There are some obvious anachronisms: in particular, his comments on Church life often do not apply today. Nevertheless, the perspicacious reader will easily be able to see the connection between some of the things he touches upon (such as the "mass delusion" movements in Chapter 10), and similar phenomena of contemporary life.

A feature that should be of special value to priests today is that Vladika Anthony is dealing chiefly with situations where the confessor has to elicit some remnant of conscience in someone who is little more than nominally Orthodox — this must be a very common situation today! Lay people reading *Confession* should be on their guard against a temptation to judge their confessor's "technique." Also, after reading Vladika Anthony's advice to show love and concern, to ask questions in a certain way, and so forth, priests should beware of trying to act the part of a "Russian Spiritual Father." When *Confession* was written, people were closer to the roots of an Orthodox culture — now it is so easy to be infected by the many pseudo-Orthodox tendencies that are prevalent in the ecclesiastical world today.

In *Confession*, Metropolitan Anthony often advises the reader to refer to other books, many of which are not available in English. In footnotes the translator has tried to

indicate which of these can be found in English, and sonic source material is included in the appendices. However, in the face of this difficulty we should bear in mind Vladika Anthony's own words (at the end of Chapter 5) that "the priest should be concerned not so much to have the printed material for guidance through confession in perfect readiness, as to immerse his attention in this field of spiritual pathology and therapy, which is revealed by the holy ascetics."

The footnotes were all written by the translator, with one exception: note 5 to Chapter 15, which was in the original text. The scriptural references that were in the original have been left in the body of the text, and some others have been added as footnotes. The Russian word "dukhovnik," which means "spiritual father," has been rendered sometimes as "spiritual father" and sometimes, for convenience, simply as "priest." In the Russian Church all priests have the right and duty to be spiritual fathers, hence the two terms coincide in meaning, whereas in the Greek Church only those priests who have been blessed for the task (pneumatikoi) have this right.

"Metropolitan Anthony had a deep knowledge of human souls. That is why his writings on pastoral theology are so striking. His book *Confession* can be compared only with St. Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Rule*," writes Protopresbyter George Grabbe (in *The Church and Her Teaching in Life*, Vol. 2, Montreal, 1970, p. 113).

Chapter One

1. The Significance of Confession for Christians.

When I was teaching theology in two of the theological academies in Russia, my students always gathered with particular interest to hear the lectures on confession, of which I gave four or more each year. At that period, and also much later, after I had finished my academic career, people begged me to write these lectures down and then have them printed. But, since I had only the briefest summary of their contents with me and I have always been overburdened by work and people, I have not managed to start working until now. I have always had to write about many things, and the only free time I had was at night.

At present I am confined in a Uniate monastery and so I have ample time at my disposal. However, I am afraid that my work will suffer no little detriment from the fact that I have not even my very short (one might almost say, symbolic) summaries with me, and of course my memory cannot retain everything that I said in the academy auditoria nineteen years or more ago. But, putting aside all pretence at a complete exposition of the subject, I will share with the reader what the Lord helps me to remember.

In a certain sense, confession is a thing which should accompany all of a priest's relationships with the faithful. When Christians refer to priests as spiritual fathers, they are acknowledging the fact that these people chosen by God have the right and obligation constantly to call their conscience to account and demand that their soul be opened to them. Of course, as life becomes more complicated and we become more worldly, as do our flock and our relationships with people, it is not possible in all circumstances to make use of this right — or rather, fulfill this duty — of our calling. But nevertheless, even poor Christians admit that essentially the matter should be otherwise. They will never be reconciled to regarding a priest in any other light than as a mediator between themselves

and God, both in prayer and in the constant struggle between good and evil which is the lot of each person. This is why even in this age of universal cooling towards faith and salvation, there do exist priests and monks who always direct their thoughts and words as if they were talking to penitents at confession, no matter to whom they are talking or what they are talking about. There are not many of them now, but not long ago, within our memory, in piously disposed patriarchal village parishes and even sometimes among educated society, it was possible to meet pastors who were so disposed and so involved with people that their conversations with their flocks, at home or at gatherings or anywhere else, could hardly be distinguished at all from their conversation during confession: salvation of the soul, the will of God, the truth of God — this is what was always the subject of the intercourse between the pastor and his flock.

A higher example of such relationships is shown by monastery elders, to whom the brothers of the monastery and also Orthodox Christians from all parts of the world come to confess their thoughts and receive advice and guidance. The answers and counsel of the elder are accepted as the voice of God, and people consider going against them as a mortal sin, like the sin of Adam and Eve. Do not think that such a relationship, or something approaching it, with one's flock and even with those coming to confession is something completely unattainable for an ordinary spiritual father: the majority of our priests themselves do not realize what a great spiritual force is in the hands of a faithful clergy. They are mostly brought up apart from the life of the laity and have been among members of the clergy from their childhood; they know them not so much as God's ministers, but rather as their own fathers, relatives or superiors. Thus our priests and sons of the clerical class in general do not look upon confession with such secrecy, such trembling and such torture as do ordinary lay people, be they simple or educated. Here otherwise separated members of our flocks who have nothing in common come together as one, except of course those who have altogether ceased coming to confession and turned themselves away from the chalice of Christ.

Perhaps my brother pastors will say to me: "You are giving us Fr. Amvrossy of Optinaⁱ and Fr. John of Kronstadt as examples. What is there in common between the piously disposed crowd sitting at their feet and my impatient flock, crowding round the confessional to the number of about 500 people, just so that they can burst in one by one, mutter a few times "Sinful, sinful" and then rush to get out of church?"

Admittedly there is not much in common here, but worse things can happen. In some very populous dioceses in the Eastern Ukraine priests hear 15-20 peoples' confessions at once, and in Petrograd many fathers hear the confessions of everyone in the church at the same time. Then they offer those who also wish to speak to the priest separately the chance to do so, but very few people turn out to be such bold Christians and sometimes nobody does. Each one thinks — "There are 500 of us and if everyone goes to talk separately then we won't be finished till morning."

This is a grievous phenomenon: I will say more -- it is horrifying. But I must mention one more which is even more horrifying, though for most people this will not be new information. At diocesan conferences after the first revolution of 1905, in several places the clergy resolved "to abolish private confession and replace it with general confession," i.e. simply abolish confession altogether. This amounts to abolishing the Orthodox Faith, since without confession the attitude towards religious life as a constant inner struggle is lost, and it is precisely this which distinguishes our faith from the

Lutheran and Stundistⁱⁱ heresies. Of course, these blasphemous resolutions were not an expression of the voice and desires of the whole clergy: the majority, I hope, were horrified when they found out about this insanity on the part of their brothers. But of course this majority will not dispute the fact that we perform confession ineffectively and in a disorderly manner, not according to the manner laid down by the Church and not in a pastoral spirit. The laity is more painfully aware of this, but on whom does it depend to arrange the matter differently? Who is chiefly to blame that it has fallen from its proper height? Of course it is us, the pastors. We were and are fully able to prevent the situation from deteriorating to such a degree; even now we can put it right, if only we desire and also strive to set to work — before all else, on our own selves. Of what should this task consist?

We have already said that clergymen do not fully realize how receptive lay people are to edifying advice when they stand before them during confession. In order to realize this clearly, let us consider the fact that the conversation which occurs at confession is an absolutely exceptional event in the life of the person confessing and of humanity in general. You see, whenever people have conversations outside confession, especially at the present time, their aim is to hide their imperfections and display their often non-existent merits. The majority of people consider their enemies to be those who have accused them of something and even those who have found out something bad about them. On the conscience of almost every person are deeds, words and thoughts which he would not admit to an acquaintance, even if threatened at the point of a knife; but the day and the hour for confession comes and he willingly expounds it all to his spiritual father. Admittedly, he will tell even his spiritual father only after a severe inner struggle, and in the confidence that the spiritual father will not repeat his confession to anyone. Perhaps he has avoided confession for several years just because he could not conquer his shame, his pride; but once he has come, he will crucify himself spiritually and recount his sin. Think on this, priest of God, and take pity on man and love him. A man is never so fine, so dear to God, as when he kills his pride before Him and before you. When only this chief enemy of our salvation, this enemy of God, pride, has been destroyed, the soul of the person confessing becomes open to receive the holiest thoughts, wishes, intentions and decisions. Blessed are you, spiritual father, if God tells you things that can help your spiritual child in the complete or gradual renunciation of his former sins. But “God helps the laborers and not the layabouts,” says St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, and so you must set as the main task in your life obtaining experience in spiritual healing, that is, in giving Christians guidance and instruction in fighting with sin and strengthening themselves in virtue.

Alas, we must admit that in this matter our clergy are completely inexperienced. They have been taught everything at school except this most important wisdom, and only those pastors have it who have obtained it through their own labours, either through reading the writings of the Fathers and the Holy Bible, or through acquaintance with an experienced elder, or through prayer and their own experience of observing themselves and their flocks, but chiefly through their own moral struggle with sin.

We have already mentioned that a spiritual father, in order to acquire skill, must work before all else on himself; what is this work? Answer: you must come to love people, to love man at least in those minutes when he has given himself up to you, given himself up to God. You are hardly likely to meet him in any better state than he is during

those minutes, and if you do not try to love him now, you will never come to love him in the conditions of ordinary life.

But how can one command one's heart to have the appropriate feelings if it is cold? No, it cannot remain cold and unsympathetic if you take the trouble to realize what it is that you are performing and what is being performed around you; if you do not come to confession "incidentally," "by the way," if you tear your soul away from practical and family problems at that time. Look what an exceptional honour God has granted you, what a favour He sends you. You see, neither to his father nor mother, nor wife, nor friend, nor king will a Christian reveal those secrets of his soul which he now reveals to God and to you. And if a surgeon wields his knife with great care and fear, in order to perform his necessary but dangerous incisions into the human body, then, of course, you must tremble and pray many times more that you will heal, and not kill, the immortal soul.

2. The Spiritual Father's own Disposition.

"If we had taken thought, we would not have been condemned," writes the Apostle. Three quarters or, perhaps, nine tenths of our sins, mistakes and even of our crimes occur because people do not want to stop and think before speaking or acting. Anyone who does not work on himself does not know what enormous significance for the soul and for living sensibly lies in cutting oneself off, if only for a moment, from the surrounding vanities and concentrating one's thoughts and conscience on what the Lord requires of one in given circumstances or at a given time.

And so, when you are about to hear peoples' confessions, and have invoked the help of divine grace, if you concentrate your thoughts on what you have read here — if you remember how you yourself came to confess your sins, how severe your own struggle with your passions and how lamentable your falls — then you have already done much good to your flock. There is no doubt that you will say compunctionate and soul-shaking words, if not to all of your spiritual children, then to many of them, words which you would not have said if you had not carried out this advice of mine, unsophisticated though it may seem. You will ask, "Can making such a small effort really bring about such great results as giving a moral shaking to several of my neighbors, for whom Christ was crucified; or even making them repent and change their whole lives? And all this now, when religion is universally despised and nobody even wants to respect bishops: how can I, an ordinary, insignificant priest, hope that my words will have such power?!"

Try it and see, is my answer, and do not be astonished. Is it difficult for a millionaire to make a whole village happy and rich by a single stroke of his pen on a bank cheque, or for a village elder to give out a hundred bushels of flour to the starving by giving a single brief command? But you are spiritually rich, very rich, even if you yourself are neither wise nor holy; you are rich not through your own spiritual strength, but through *"the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophesy; with the laying on of hands of the presbytery"* (1 Tim. 4:4). Your words are not powerful of themselves, but the soil, the earth on which your spiritual seed is falling, is fertile. This fertility has been cultivated by centuries of Church life; although Church life has been shaken in our days,

it still bears in itself the traces or reflection of the countless spiritual feats, struggles and sufferings of the society that educated the Christian and his family, and also by his own efforts, even if not very constant, to overcome evil and implant good and faith in his heart. And now, in accordance with the Church's teaching, he looks upon you as God's herald, as a prophet, and he supplements the value of your words and thoughts from his own uplifted state and his faith, as if he were listening to the words of God. And this is almost how it really is. If you have taken this man's grief and struggle upon yourself, if you have loved him and abased yourself before the Lord in your heart, and called in prayer on the help of His grace, then even though you be a sinful pastor, the words of the Lord will be fulfilled in you: "*It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you*" (Mt. 10:20). This is not to be understood in the fully supernatural sense, that the priest receives each time a special revelation from God which by-passes his own head and heart; but in the sense that the grace of God, invoked in humble prayer by him who is accomplishing this great mystery, enlightens his soul with spiritual love and compassion towards those repenting, and then, as St. Tikhon of Zadonsk says, addressing himself even to zealous lay people, "love seeks out the words which can be of use to your neighbour and this does not require great learning — it requires only remembering (about God and one's conscience)."

This is why we remain deeply convinced that the principal condition for fruitful spiritual direction consists in being convinced that it is not our wisdom that enlightens our spiritual children and strengthens them in good intentions, but the grace of God, enlightening their souls and your own soul, as you are an intermediary between them and God. If I could instill such a conviction and feeling into the priestly reader, I would consider my guidance quite adequate and even finished, in view of the words of St. Tikhon which have just been cited. If we still continue our talk about confession and even touch on the question of its outward order, then this is primarily so that the priestly reader, after examining the matter in detail, should thus find an even stronger stimulus to fill his own soul with zeal to attain the spirit of faith, humility and compassionate, pastoral love towards penitents.

Nevertheless, it requires great persistence to convince spiritual fathers to embark on this inner struggle, and even so, unfortunately, they often remain unconvinced; for to the same degree that this ascetic task of being a spiritual father is great, holy and fruitful — to that same degree do evil temptations distract our souls from it. First we will consider those which come not from our evil will but from faintheartedness and inexperience. Here is the first thing that an inexperienced priest will tell you in reply to the idea that he can have a profound influence on the souls of penitents: "Half the people coming to confession are used to doing it as a burdensome and boring social convention; when social convention ceased to require this, especially since the time of the Revolution, the majority of them also ceased preparing for Communion, and of those who still carry out this custom, all but a minority do it just out of habit. Saying words of love to them and giving them fiery exhortations is just the same as pouring water into a sieve." I do not agree with you, dear brother, but I will not argue with what you have said. Of course, it would be too bold to claim to convert to a life of virtue all those who receive the sacrament of confession from you. But read the Book of Acts. Did the preachers of conversion to God manage to make all the inhabitants of the towns they visited believers in Christ without exception? No, they concentrated their attention and feelings on the few

who did believe and then imparted to them the word of God and also their own soul (1 Thess. 2:8). Of course, those who heard them were people of other faiths, not their flock, their spiritual children, as the Christians who come to you for confession are. But I would like to convince you that if you receive even a few humble sinners into your soul as a father, exhort them with a voice of sympathy and love in the name of God and teach them to struggle spiritually, then even that will be a greater moral feat in the eyes of God and the Church than all the other things you do to serve Him. If you are the active secretary of a diocesan council, the manager of a candle factory or take part in the administration of a seminary, all these respected labors are worth nothing in comparison with returning even one soul from the path of perdition into the way of salvation. In theory of course you yourself agree with this; but unfortunately, with the majority of priests these worldly or semi-worldly matters take up much more, not only of their time, but also of their heartfelt concern and diligence than does caring for that which is dearer than the whole world — the human souls which have been entrusted to them.

You are afraid of being repulsed by the people you try to exhort? Begin with those from whom you can expect a different attitude; just begin — just work on yourself, as I have written here, and approach this mystery with good will and prayer. If only God would let you taste that spiritual sweetness with which you could repeat the words of the father in the Gospel: *“For this my son was dead and is alive, was lost and is found”* (Lk. 15:32). You will do just as much good to him spiritually as you are doing to yourself. Like a young woman who has given birth to her firstborn, you will find completely new feelings in your soul — feelings hitherto unknown to you and unseen by worldly people — abundant waves of the holy feelings of love, compassion for people, exultant glorification of the Savior, and hence boldness for the holy faith and readiness to bear everything for the truth of Christ. Then you will understand, even if you did not understand it before the day of your ordination, that a priest is not an ordinary Christian, not an ordinary person, but a co-participant in the redemptive feat of Christ, bearing in his own soul the multitude of souls that has been entrusted to him. Then you will understand that the grace of the priesthood which has been given to you is not just “the right to perform Church services,” but a definite *moral* gift, a special virtue of spiritual love, of which St. John Chrysostom, defining the essence of the priesthood, says: “Spiritual love is not born of anything earthly; it proceeds from above, from Heaven, and is given in the mystery of the priesthood, but the assimilation and maintenance of this gift also depends on the strivings of the human spirit.” I have quoted these words of this Church Father more than once in my writings, for they set a seal with great precision on everything that has been written above.

3. The Influence of Confession.

Here is a penitent, after humbly confessing his sins, listening to the gentle voice of his spiritual father, filled with love and reverence: “The Lord forgives those who repent; He is close to your soul and wishes you victory over your sin more than you do yourself, just as you wish your children to be strengthened in good more than they themselves do. When the struggle begins in your heart, remember that your Guardian Angel is following

the vacillations of your soul with anxious grief; take pity on your own soul. You can see that even I am sad for you, and God loves us so many times more than we love each other. If you yourself do not repulse His help, He will not give you over into slavery to your former passions. Call upon Him in time of temptation, sign yourself with the sign of the Cross, turn your gaze away from the temptations, keep away from people who incline you towards evil or irritate you, and then you will be a victor over your invisible enemies.” With words like these, gentle though they are, the spiritual father has already deeply moved the soul of the penitent, which was shaken even before that. Renewed in spirit he returns to his everyday occupations after communing the Holy Mysteries and his whole household notices that something special has happened to him, changing his disposition and, indeed, his life itself.

He himself will probably share with others the holy feelings which were wafted upon him by the pastor’s heartfelt exhortations. He will feel the most heartfelt gratitude and love towards the latter, and will begin to advise everyone to go to that priest for confession. Nevertheless, we are obliged to fulfill our duty irrespective of the success or failure of our exhortations, as the Lord said to the prophet Ezekiel (Ch. 2). But you have a blessing to succeed. When you have heard people’s confessions once or twice, or even just the confession of one person, new spiritual children will come to you one after the other. One will come to you at home and weep over his spiritual wounds, or ask consolation for the woes afflicting his soul; another will ask for confession in church, even outside the usual time. The news about the warm-hearted, loving and reverent pastor will rapidly spread, not only throughout the village but also through the local town, and may God grant that you manage to respond to all these entreaties for spiritual healing that are put before you.

“What? In our Bolshevik times, when zealous pastors are reviled, driven out and killed?” Even in our time murderers are murderers and atheists are atheists, but there are still incomparably more who believe and pray than there are atheists, and they will nestle close, probably more fervently than before, to the footstool of a pastor who treats their confession not as a sounding board but as a loving and compassionate father — a pastor such as we are all obliged to be who have received the grace of ordination and so should feel like St. John the Apostle: *“There is no greater joy for me than to hear that my children are walking in the truth”* (3 Jn. 4). Of course, the pastor will not be free from clashes with unworthy children, with sons of disobedience, even when performing the mystery of confession, but your soul should be filled with joy over the children of obedience, and repeat the words of the psalm (50), *“I shall teach Thy ways to the lawless and the Godless shall return to Thee.”* You will not convert all the iniquitous, for even the blood of the Lord was shed “for many,” and did not draw all to the Crucified One, and the Apostle Paul said, *“I am made all things to all men that by all means I might save some”* (1 Cor. 9:22). This is true, but even so the obstacles to your worthily fulfilling your vocation as a spiritual father are not in people, not outside you, but in you yourself — if you do not want to make a start with this holy work, as the Lord commands.

“Of course, you are right,” many spiritual fathers will answer me. “Of course, if I were a saint, if I could irradiate my heart with such sympathy towards people and such faith. I could probably attain, with the assistance of God’s grace, everything that you are talking about. But we haven’t been taught that; my soul is callous, I can hardly ever pray with warmth and compunction, and to acquire such evangelical love for people from

whom you constantly hear insults and offences — this is beyond my strength and I have never even thought that such a disposition was obligatory for me; nor do my brat her priests or relatives ever speak about that.”

I expect answers like this from many sincere pastors — perhaps even from the majority — but their woe is not in this, nor is the woe of their flock. If you make such an admission in a spirit of self-reproach, if you say these words with a contrite heart, this is already victory (Mk. 9:24). The other possibility is terrible: it is terrible if you say such words with haughty contempt and mockery of man’s repentance, of your neighbour’s soul; if it is with humble grief over yourself, then “*a broken and contrite heart God will not despise*” (Ps. 50:19) and “*the Lord is near to the contrite in heart and saves the humble in spirit*” (Ps. 33:19). The more profoundly you become aware how far you are from that spirit of all-embracing love and compassion with which Christ’s pastor should be filled, the more you lament over your hard-heartedness, the nearer is God’s grace to you and the more accessible is your soul to radiant illumination. A thought will suggest words of despondency to you: “Well, how are you, an unfeeling, self-loving and irritable man, to take to heart the sins of others as if they were your own and crucify yourself before God together with all the people confessing, when you are weary with labouring at confession for a whole day? Just listen to the sin and read the absolution and it is quite all right if you do not do anything more.” But you must reply to the thought, “Suppose that’s what I really am like, suppose I am not capable of taking the correct attitude to this high pastoral duty, and for the majority of my spiritual children turn out to be just a formal witness of their repentance. Even so I will do as much as I am able, that is, as much as the Lord helps me to do. And now I am going to begin by humbly entreating Him to bring me to my senses and teach me to soften my heart and bestow upon me the spirit of compassionate love and guiding wisdom, in order to teach my spiritual children how to struggle with sin. In addition to that I will try in good time also to organize the outward arrangements for confession so as to be able to give as much time as possible to each of the faithful; and I myself will learn from the Holy Fathers about guiding the human soul in its struggle between good and evil.”

If you made a firm resolution like this, then sooner or later you will become an excellent spiritual physician for the faithful. Only hold to this resolution and do not give in to despondency when impatience, irritability and tiredness rise up in your soul and begin tempting you against God’s work. If at first you speak sincerely, in a fatherly and brotherly way, with even a few out of many, and then offer to God sincere repentance that you were not a spiritual father for all of them; then you will come to the next confession already more mature spiritually, with a more softened soul, with clearer faith in the grace-given strength of God, and thus you yourself will gradually grow into a perfect man, and your spiritual children into the fullness of the stature of Christ.

4. The Outward Arrangement of Confession.

It is difficult to arrange confession any better than it is now in the majority of Orthodox parishes — where four or six hundred persons' confessions have to be heard in one day, and confession takes place only during five or eight days out of the whole year.¹

Spiritual fathers will confirm this and say, "It certainly is difficult: indeed, it is quite impossible. In the first year of my service as a priest I tried to increase the number of days for confession, but my parishioners just didn't take any notice." I am ready to believe you, dear brother: the customs of village life are very tenacious and the peasant is bound in his way of life by a multitude of things in his life as a farmer and as a family man. He and his family will not change these if the new *batiushka*² limits himself to making an announcement at the beginning of the period of preparation for Communion that those who wish to take Communion may come to confession both on Tuesday and on Wednesday. The exhortation of your parishioners to come to confession not only on the four or seven Fridays of the Great Lent and on the eve of the Annunciation should not be left till four days before the actual confession. No, start as early as the Feast of the Nativity of the Saviour to tell your parishioners what significance an unhurried confession of their sins and a talk of ten or even five minutes with their spiritual father have for the soul. Explain in advance that there is no necessity whatever of going to confession on the eve of Communion or of taking Communion unfailingly on a Saturday. Read to them from the Lenten Triodion that, "Those who are overburdened with work take Communion during Lent at any Presanctified Liturgy and on Sundays." If not many people take advantage of that which you have explained to them during the first Lent, then later those who came to confession not on Friday, but earlier, will tell the others how compunctionate it was to reveal their soul before their spiritual father, how "It was just as if *batiushka* had taken a heavy weight off my shoulders, and taught me how to get away from sin." The following year, or even at the next fast — i.e., St. Peter's fast or before Dormition, many others will follow the example of these Christians. And now that people have recognized you as an experienced and edifying spiritual father, you will acquire in their eyes the right to assign days and times for confession according to your own discretion, provided only that you announce them well in advance and then appear punctually at the appointed days and times to hear confessions.

Each time you must precede confession with a detailed and inspiring sermon, or even more than one. In the first one, exhort people to sincere repentance before God and to a sincere confession of sins before their spiritual father. In the second one, which you will deliver at the reading of the prayers of the rite of confession, recall what penances were prescribed by the Church at the Ecumenical Councils and read out several of them from the *Trebnik* (for fornication seven years exclusion from Communion, for adultery, fifteen years, for not keeping the fasts, two years). Then read the words of the Nomocanons³ in the *Trebnik*⁴ by which it is permitted to reduce the penances on account of tearful repentance, fasting, almsgiving or tonsure into the monastic order, and explain that without these conditions — i.e., without great contrition of heart and ascetic struggles — the sins of perhaps the majority of those standing before you would prevent them being allowed to take Communion. If contemporary pastors dare to take upon

themselves the responsibility before God of admitting them to Communion, then it is in view of the general corruption of Christian morals and the Christian way of life, which has made the struggle with sin incomparably harder for the sons of the Church than it was before, when there was a general zeal for salvation, when people stimulated each other to moral struggles and were ashamed of their sins before each other. Now society's attitude to sins and virtues is exactly the opposite, and so it is already necessary somewhat to soften the requirements of the book of penances, but only within certain limits, lest the priest should also burn in the same flames as the sinners he had unlawfully admitted to Communion, as is said in rule 183 of the Nomocanon. In general, read without fail in this sermon the words under the headings "He says to him..." and "Pay attention also to this..." (three paragraphs), which are in the chapter "Exhortation from a Spiritual Father to his Spiritual Child"; at this point also read without fail the concluding instruction under the heading "How Spiritual Fathers Should Dispose those Confessing to them," which is based on the rules of the First and other Ecumenical Councils and on the seventy-fifth chapter of Matthew Vlastaris⁵. Then, in order to avoid misunderstandings, remind those standing before you of the self-evident truth, that, even if a priest has the great daring to admit great sinners to Communion when they have offered sincere repentance, he still has absolutely no right to do the same for those Christians who do not admit some notorious sin of theirs to be sinful, or even admit that it is sinful but do not express any determination to stop it, desiring to continue in their sinful state — for example, of illicit cohabitation. Absolution of sins and communion of the Holy Mysteries have sense only on condition of a resolution to get out of one's criminal, sinful state and correct one's life. Without this condition, Communion will only be a new and serious sin, both for the sinner who does not wish to correct himself, and for the priest who has admitted him to Communion. Therefore, those who continue in illicit cohabitation, or a so-called civil marriage, should not be admitted to Communion until they have separated from their concubines, realizing that this is what they are.

Try to give Christians Communion not only in the Great Lent, but also in the others, and in the Great Lent, not only on Saturdays, but also on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, and on the Annunciation and on Polyelos days⁶ when the Presanctified is appointed. Either do it this way, or else persuade them to confess not only on the eve of Communion but also on the preceding days. Then at confession your heart will not have that uneasy feeling: "however shall I manage to dismiss before nightfall all the four hundred people who have come to confession?"

Also try to ensure that the person coming to confession unfailingly hears the confession prayers and the exhortation printed in the Trebnik: "Behold, child, Christ stands invisibly before you..."⁷ Of course, all this should really be re-read to each person who comes, but since it is impossible to do this, these prayers should be read after the service for all those who are preparing for confession, and since not all those coming to confession are in church by then, these prayers should be repeated several times as new groups of people enter the church during the course of the whole day. Further, if a whole crowd of people is waiting in line for several hours in the church or near the church, it is profitable for some respected parishioners or seminarians to take turns reading either patristic counsels from the Synaxarion, or lives of saints deliberately chosen beforehand, or — and this is especially profitable — the Sermon by St. Cyril of Alexandria on Death and the Dread Judgement, which is in the combined Psalter and Book of Hours⁸. When

this sermon is read during the blessing of many people after vespers on Forgiveness Day⁹ (which lasts about two hours), a large number of the people do not leave church even after the blessing, but listen with tears to the awesome words of the saint. With such compunction Christians also listen to the life of St Mary of Egypt on the eve of the Thursday of the fifth week of Lent. These things should unfailingly be read in Slavonic and in a somewhat singing tone, so that the listeners can make out the words.

The great number of people confessing does not make it possible to read the preliminary confession prayers for each of them individually, but unfailingly read over each of them the most important prayer “Lord God, the salvation of Thy servants...,” and stop thinking that the essential prayer of the mystery — which is the only one read by virtually the majority of priests — is the following: “The Lord and God Jesus Christ.”¹⁰ This prayer was introduced into our order of confession quite recently, less than three hundred years ago; neither the Creeks nor the Edinoversti¹¹ have it, but it came to us from the Roman Catholics. Of course, now it should be read also, but even more so must that prayer which the Universal Church of Christ established from patristic or even apostolic times be repeated over each person.

Besides this, explain to people on each confession day that they must unfailingly read or reverently listen to the entire rule of Prayers before Holy Communion,¹² and afterwards all of the Prayers of Thanksgiving, without which Communion will be unto judgment and condemnation, as it was for Judas. Do not expound these thoughts as if they were your own, but read them from the “Instructive Notice” in the combined Psalter and Book of Hours, and from St. Simeon the New Theologian on tears during Communion.¹³

¹ In pre-revolutionary Russia most lay-people received Communion very infrequently, usually only once a year, it was customary to commune on one of the Saturdays of Great Lent after preparing oneself by attending the special Lenten services during the preceding week. Thus on a few days of the year priests would be overburdened with confessions and unable to give each person sufficient attention. In most Russian churches of the emigration people usually receive Communion more often and as the parishes are not so large, this problem is not so acute but it persists to some extent, especially in large parishes during Holy Week.

² Batiushka: a Russian term of endearment and respect for priests; it is a diminutive of “father.”

³ Nomocanon: a collection of canon laws arranged according to subject matter. This is not available in English translation — the English “Rudder” (“Pedalion”) contains the canons grouped according to the councils and -fathers who decreed them.

⁴ Trebnik (Book of Needs, Euchologion) a book containing services performed according to the needs of individuals (e.g., Baptism, Marriage, Confession, Memorial Services). Many of these services, including the full Rite of Confession, may be found in “The Service Book” translated by I. Hapgood. Since, however, it does not contain the

references to the canons to which Metropolitan Anthony refers in his text, we have translated them and included them as Appendix B of this book.

⁵ See Appendix B.

⁶ i.e. great saints' days. Those occurring during Lent are the Feasts of the First and Second Findings of the Head of St. John the Baptist, February 24, and the feast of Forty Martyrs of Sobastia in Armenia, March 9.

⁷ See Appendix A.

⁸ This sermon may be found (abridged) in "Eternal Mysteries Beyond the Grave," Jordanville, 1968, pp. 62-63.

⁹ Forgiveness Day, or Cheese-fare Sunday, is the day before Great Lent begins. After vespers on this day Orthodox Christians prostrate before each other in church and ask mutual forgiveness before embarking on the spiritual struggles of the approaching fast. First each person asks forgiveness of the priest who also asks forgiveness and blesses each person in turn. In a large parish this can take several hours.

¹⁰ See Appendix A. The second prayer contains the expression, "I, His unworthy priest ... do forgive and absolve," which is foreign to the Orthodox approach to confession, in which it is God Who forgives, and not the priest.

¹¹ Edinoversti: Old Believers who have re-united with the Orthodox Church but have been allowed to retain their old (pre-Nikonian) ritual. In the opinion of Metropolitan Anthony and others this ritual was in some points purer than that of the Orthodox Church as it had not been subject to western influence. Of course, this correctness in outward matters was of no benefit to them so long as they cut themselves off from the Church — "straining at a gnat but swallowing a camel," in the words of our Savior.

¹² The Russian Church requires her faithful to say three canons and one akathist, in addition to the Prayers Before and After Communion; all of these may be found in the English "Prayer Book" (Jordanville 1960). Other Orthodox Churches such as the Greek Church do not have a single rule for everyone, but leave it to the discretion of the individual and his spiritual father.

¹³ These are not available in English. Something similar could be read from the Prayer Book (p. 370): "Those who are preparing for Holy Communion...."

5. Spiritual Direction.

In a few words we have given directions about how a spiritual father should establish in penitents that disposition of soul — a disposition of repentance, faith and hope — with

which confession becomes fruitful. But this is not enough. When they have noticed that the priest has pain in his heart for his children, the latter will also persistently expect from him guidance and directions for the correction of their life. In general this is the first demand of an awakened conscience. The Jews asked St. John the Baptist what they had to do in order to enter the Kingdom of God; both the rich youth and “a certain lawyer” asked about the same thing, about eternal life, when they drew near to Jesus, as did the three thousand witnesses of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles.

Russian people do not go to monastery elders for any other reason than to ask them directions on the path into the Kingdom of Heaven. When they met Fr. John of Kronstadt in railway stations, in church, in the street, they seized him by the cassock with the plea: “Batiushka, teach me not to swear, teach me not to quarrel with my wife; tell me if I should go to a monastery or get married*. It is difficult even for an experienced spiritual father to give intelligent answers to such unexpected questions amid a crowd of jostling people; but our spiritual fathers experience even greater difficulty at confession, even if it is unhurried. This is because most of them do not have spiritual experience, and have not endeavoured to borrow it from the Holy Fathers. At theological school the usual lay teacher could not teach them to do this, preferring to be not a servant of the Church, but a Titular Councilor,ⁱⁱⁱ and thinking only of how to transfer from pastoral theology — a subject hateful to him since childhood — to civil history or at least to the Latin language.

What then should I read in order to acquire spiritual wisdom? Read much, but know that the principal means of learning are attention to oneself, checking on the life of one’s own soul, reverent prayer and observation, compassionate and full of love, of the souls surrounding you, of your flock, your family and your acquaintances.

But what should you read? First of all, read the Bible, concurrently from 1) Pentateuch and Kings, 2) from the Prophets and Wisdom Books and 3) from the New Testament. Read every day, for at least half an hour. If you make yourself read through the Bible twice in this way, then subsequently you will reread it at your own desire and inclination. Anyone who has read the Holy Bible three times cannot help becoming a religious philosopher and moralist.

However, this is important principally for the priest*s general spiritual development; there also exist patristic works directly relating to the guidance of penitents. But before you begin reading them I advise you to master the key to the understanding of spiritual life, i.e. to read the book *The Path to Salvation* by Bishop Theophan the Recluse (d. 1894),^{iv} with attention and, I think, not just once; then start reading the *Synaxarion*.^v But do not read it in order in which it is written; if you will soon have to start hearing confessions, look in the table of contents and find articles which relate to human weaknesses and passions and teach how to struggle with them; such articles are listed at the end of the *Synaxarion*.

I am pointing out the primary importance of the *Synaxarion* for counseling penitents firstly, because most churches have this book, except for those built recently, but chiefly because this book, as well as the *Limonarion* of Sophronius of Jerusalem, or the *Spiritual Meadow* by? John Moschus, or similar collections of the “memorable sayings about the holy fathers,” expounds the rules of piety in parables, as did the Savior, or in events from the lives of righteous men, which are more easily assimilated than direct advice, and are remembered longer, on the most part, for one’s whole life. I will give just one example. A monk who had long been fighting against temptations with

terrible struggles became faint in spirit and started praying to God to lighten the cross which had been placed on him in life: “Is it really impossible for me to reach the Heavenly Kingdom and spiritual perfection with a less painful cross?” An Angel appeared and led him into a spacious upper room, on the walls of which hung many varied crosses: heavy? iron ones and lighter wooden ones; among both the former and the latter were some very? large crosses, some smaller and some very small. “The Lord has heard your prayer,” said the Angel, “and permitted you to choose a cross for yourself.”

“Do you suppose God will forgive me’, said the hermit, that I, after struggling for many years, am now taking for myself this, the smallest of the little wooden crosses?”

Then the Angel said to him, “This is the very cross you have been hearing up to this day and which you considered too exhausting; all the other crosses are incomparably heavier.” Then the monk understood his foolishness and offered repentance, realizing that the Lord never lays on people a burden beyond their strength; but a Christian must accept it submissively and pray for the help of divine grace.

If a priest assimilates the contents of similar stories in the *Synaxarion* and continuously reads at least this and a few other simple books, then he will learn quite thoroughly to guide Christians in their struggle with sins and passions. But there is a whole library of such spiritual cures. Such primarily is the collection of patristic writings in five volumes called the *Philokalia*,^{vi} collected by the same Bishop Theophan the Recluse. The volumes of this can be obtained separately, and especially useful are the first two, in which the writings of the greatest ascetics are collected: Anthony, Pachomius, Isaiah and so on. One of the most highly developed themes in the fathers is the teaching about the eight chief passions of the human heart and struggling with them. If you cannot now obtain the *Philokalia*, those same fathers can be bought separately. Especially useful is the book of Sts. Barsanuphius and John, containing the “Answers” to the monks’ questions on matters of piety, and also the *Ladder*, by St. John, abbot of Mount Sinai, in which there is a special word or “epistle” “To Pastors.”^{vii}

Among more contemporary works there is “Advice to the Priest on Performing the Mystery of Confession” by Archbishop Platon of Kostroma, written sixty years ago, hut this advice is somewhat formal and scholastic. More practical are the exemplary “Questions to Penitents” by Metropolitan Jonah, Exarch of Georgia, which many spiritual fathers in monasteries had in manuscript, and it is unlikely that they remained unpublished.

However, the priest should be concerned not so much with having the printed material for guidance through confession in perfect readiness, as with immersing his attention in this field of spiritual pathology and therapy, which is revealed by the holy ascetics. Then he will add to it his own independent activity, will make use of the Fathers’ experience consciously and adapt it to those states of soul which his parishioners will reveal to him at confession and in general in spiritual talks.

6. Spiritual Healing. Unbelief and Weak Faith.

In our academy lectures on pastoral theology, we gave instructions about how to give edifying advice at confession to people with various dispositions and from various walks of life. Of course, even then we could make no claim to enumerate all the varied conditions of inner life and external situations of Christians, conditions which are endlessly variable. Here, where we are living at present, far from the short summaries which we made for delivering the lectures, we can manage only to set forth what little we remember of what we borrowed from the writings of the Fathers and from our own spiritual experience.

To begin with, let us consider the most acute cases. The person confessing declares that he does not believe. Nowadays such a person would probably not even come to confession, but then (I was teaching until the last years of the 19th century, until the spring of 1900), he would explain that he came because of the requirement of civil law for officers and civil servants, or the requirements of a school for its pupils, or finally, at the insistence of his parents or wife, or in order to observe family customs. But I am still convinced that at the present time of triumphant nihilism such people must appear not infrequently at the confessional. First of all, one must ask if they seriously and sincerely want to talk to the priest, or if they have only come to make mock of him; in the latter event they should simply be sent away. It is essential that your question be affectionate and full of sympathy. If he answers that he would like to be convinced of the truths of faith, or at least re-examine his convictions, then of course it is better to offer to have a preliminary talk with him in another place before confession, especially if he is an adult and an educated person. If you notice that his unbelief is only imaginary or passing, and feel that he can be brought to his senses in a few minutes, then ask him why he lost his faith. Was it from reading books, and if so, which ones? Or from various soul-shaking events — disillusionment, misfortune, prayers unanswered by God (this happens especially often with women) or for other reasons? If he names Tolstoy^{viii} or Renan^{ix} or other writers as being responsible for his loss of faith, then say “Of course, these books strive to kill faith in people, but it cannot be that they are a sufficient reason for you not to believe. You probably did not take the trouble to read a single book in defence of the faith, or even one book devoted to refuting the thinkers you mentioned. Admit that you started reading these books with a desire to be delivered from faith; and if this is not so, then still, before reading them you must have found religion burdensome, since if this were not so you would not have come to part with it so easily, but, sick at heart, you would have sought a person or another book which could have dispersed your doubts. On the contrary, did you not seek out those books and companions who could destroy even what remained of your faith? Why did you begin to find it burdensome, and when? Wasn't it when you lost your chastity or wished to lose it, but faith and your conscience prevented you, and you began to hate them just as a mischievous schoolboy hates the person in authority over him? It is not reason, but unchastity which is the enemy of faith, as the Lord said: ‘Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation,’ and so on (Mk. 9:38). He did not say: ‘in this lazy or self-interested generation,’ but ‘adulterous generation,’ for He knew where and whence enmity against God begins. Many people have read your Tolstoy and Renan and not lost their faith, and others have compiled detailed refutations, both of these writers and of Darwin, Marx and so on. I will give you the refutations I know, and those which I do not know I will find

out for you from people who do, if you really want to study these questions deeply, and are not simply covering up your immorality by naming books and philosophers.

“Thus you have admitted that it was not a book, but your evil will which took you away from God. Repent before Him, but if you are very far from Him, then admit to yourself your heavy guilt against truth and your conscience, and then you will receive the desire to ask God for the remission of your sin, your renunciation of your Redeemer. If you are already full of such repentant feelings, then let us pray; I will say the prayer of absolution over you. But as to approaching the Holy Mysteries, think about it first. If the Lord returns faith and hope to your heart, then receive Communion; but if the spirit of unbelief remains in your heart, then wait a while: but do not put off thinking about and investigating this, which is the most important thing on earth, and which is all that remains when we part from the earth. You said that you accept only facts, but death is an indubitable fact. Tell me, is there any sense in our life, if it comes to an end here just as the soul has been brought to fulfillment by maturity and thirst for understanding? Is there any sense in all that is good and great, if there is no God? For then, you see, there is no difference left between good and evil; all those who deny God have been compelled to admit this, the latest of them being the famous Spencer.^x Believe me, no sincere and thoughtful person can deny God and accept these conclusions about good and evil and the senselessness of life; when people talk of denying Him, they are just boasting and wanting to escape their pangs of conscience.”

A man can be brought to his senses by such words, or similar ones, provided they come from heartfelt sympathy and compassion, and often such a person who imagined he was an atheist will there and then admit how grievously he was in error and ask for absolution. But if this does not happen straightaway, even so he will bow his head and become thoughtful, and will not refuse to continue his talk with the priest outside the church, or go to see someone who in your opinion can disperse his doubts. Of course, I am far from thinking that such a talk can bring about a conversion in the soul of every person who declares that he does not believe. It is necessary to speak to one person one way and to another person, differently. But I am giving an example of how the voice of pastoral love and the conditions of confession enable you to talk about faith and unbelief on a completely different plane from the usual one; usually people start talking about a book or attack, perhaps correctly, the unbelieving author named by the person they are talking to. The latter then starts employing subtle arguments to defend his teacher. But here you are calling upon the person to place himself under judgement and admit those sinful desires which drew his attention and sympathy to the enemies of God, and so tore him away from God.

If the unbeliever to whom you are speaking is stubborn and does not yield or even becomes angry and starts quarreling, however gentle you are, then still do all you can to ensure that he does not consider this talk as final, but remains willing to come and see you again or to go to some other better informed teacher to whom you can direct him. You know, in one of Gogol’s fantasies, the soul of a sleeping girl is separated from her and says, I think to some magician or other, “Marusya” (I probably have the name wrong) “doesn’t know a tenth of what her soul knows.” If someone who considers himself an unbeliever has come to a priest, that means that in his soul, unknown to himself, there remains a considerable desire to get his faith back, although he also has the opposing desire to avoid it. Keep your pastoral eye on such a person and know that the

more sharply and angrily he speaks to you, the more strongly his soul is struggling within him, his conscience struggling with the demon of unbelief and opposition to God. Unbelievers are converted to living faith in various ways, but rarely as the fruit of a gradual refutation of all the pseudo-scientific arguments against the existence of God or the immortality of the soul which they had accepted. Usually, after an inner struggle, at once both intellectual and moral, the turning point comes suddenly, and the person is no longer even interested in refuting his former arguments, but discards these theories as useless husks, as empty sophisms. It becomes clear that they only propped up his unbelief, which came from embitterment or insubmissiveness. Now, softened by a word of pastoral love, the soul has itself found a way out of its gloomy dungeon into the light, and soared to God in prayer. Of course, it would do no harm if the penitent thoroughly studied everything that has been said or written for and against his former atheistic ideas. But only a few will agree to this — they more readily start carefully reading the word of God, listening attentively to the Church prayers and devoting themselves to works of love. O, how blessed you are, minister of God, if you have found the key that enables you to enter into the soul and heart of such a person and open up for him a truthful outlook on himself. This is what the Lord brought about in the soul of Zaccheus, who himself understood what was necessary for him to begin living in God: “Behold, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold” (Lk. 19:8).

It is considerably easier for a priest to overcome partial unbelief, or weak faith, on the part of a penitent. Many people confess that they cannot convince themselves that Holy Communion is really the Body and Blood of Christ, or of various miracles performed by the saints, of the necessity of the fasts, of the existence of the devil, and so on. This sort of unbelief is nearly always based on thoughtlessness and the habit of credulously repeating things that are constantly to be heard in the worldly conversations of stupid people. The priest should ask the doubtful person what he does believe in particularly strongly: in the Gospel? In the words of Christ? — Yes! — and all these questions which he finds doubtful have been clearly and definitely answered by the Saviour Himself, in words which he has either forgotten, or to which he has never paid attention. “Either deny belief in God Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ and His words, or believe as He taught us. No kind of geography or ethnography or zoology can tell you whether the devil exists or not; lead a religious life and you will find out for yourself the difference between temptations from the devil and those from your own evil will, and until you believe your Saviour, do not believe those deceivers and idiots either, who assert that those possessed by demons were just epileptics: did the Lord drive epilepsy into a herd of pigs? Did He not distinguish demonic temptations from those temptations due to faint-heartedness and passions, as in the parable of the sower?”

About the fasts, are not these His words?: “But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father Which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Mt. 6:17-18); “They will fast when the bridegroom is taken away from them”; “This kind are not expelled except by prayer and fasting.” Besides this, without fail direct the doubting person’s attention to the words spoken by Christ in His parting talk with His disciples after the Mystic Supper: “He that believeth on Me, the works that I do he shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father” (In. 14:12). If you

believe in Christ's miracles, and do not consider Him a dishonorable fraud, then you must also believe these words of His, which He confirmed before His Ascension: "These signs shall follow them that believe . . ." (Mk. 16:17), and so on. The irrational Protestants believe in the miracles performed by the Apostles which are reported in the hook of Acts, but they do not believe in those which are set forth in their "Lives." Why? Was one of Christ's promises not to be fulfilled? "If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them" (Mk. 16:18). You see, there is no information about any such miracle in Holy Scripture, but there is in the life of the Apostle John (the Theologian). A vain attempt was made to put him to death by poisoning, but the poison did not harm the Apostle in the least. To those in doubt about the reality of Communion, repeat not only Christ's words at the Mystic Supper, but also His words about the bread which comes down from Heaven (Jn. 6), which they probably do not know. Besides this, obtain and give to people to read the short but very convincing pamphlet by St. Dimitry of Rostov, "To Those in Doubt about the Reality of the Transformation of Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ." Here the usual doubts about the Holy Mysteries are dispersed remarkably simply and clearly.

7. Imaginary Doubts.^{xi}

There are other articles of faith which some people cannot accept without difficulty; it is impossible to enumerate them all, but we hope that from these four examples a zealous spiritual father will learn how to struggle with all such doubts experienced by Christians.

It is yet more essential for him to distinguish unbelief, or doubts that really spring from unbelief, from imaginary or apparent doubts, which often severely oppress inexperienced Christians and put them in a situation where they are helpless. Many a faithful and prayerful Christian laments to his spiritual father, "At times I believe in Communion, at times I believe in God, but at times it is as if I don't believe at all." I had answers to lamentations like this printed in the last, or next to the last number of the "Parish Bulletin," published by the Holy Synod in February, 1917, and then in the fourth supplementary volume of my writings (Kiev, 1918), in the "Letter to a Priest about Learning to Pray."^{xiii} Such thoughts of unbelief arise in the souls of suspicious people who love to examine all their thoughts and feelings minutely, and are filled with a constant futile fear that they will do something wrong or be found to have neglected something. Then it seems to them that they are ill, or that their child is getting ill, or is just about to get ill, or something similar. Not infrequently they fall into yet greater woes, into so-called "blasphemous thoughts," when abusive words come into their heads, completely against their will, together with thoughts of the name of Christ or the Mother of God. And of course, the more they fight against these absurd combinations, the more persistently they come crowding into their heads. Inexperienced people begin in horror to think that they are blasphemers, and inexperienced priests start talking to them about the serious sin of blasphemy, about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit as the greatest of all sins. After this these poor souls immediately start to experience an influx of abusive expressions about the Holy Spirit, are tormented, waste away and even consider suicide,

thinking that they have already perished eternally anyhow. And the priest will not be able to help those tormented by these thoughts until they meet a man more informed about spiritual life, who will explain to them that the best medicine can be obtained at any theological book shop and is not expensive; it is another pamphlet by St. Dimitry, entitled “About Blasphemous Thoughts.” Here it is explained in the words of the great Fathers of antiquity that such thoughts are not the fruit of hatred towards God and the saints, but simply combinations of abusive words or sounds in the head of an imaginative person, and so they do not in any way constitute a sin. One should not pay any attention to them, but calmly pray and receive Communion, no matter how stupid the words or images that may be crowding into one’s head.

An apparent lack of faith in Holy Communion, or even in God Himself, that comes from time to time, has a similar significance. Faith is a very subtle, spiritual, feeling. However much it may be present in us, if we fumble to find it in ourselves, as if taking account of all the qualities of our feeling towards God or the Mother of God and the other saints, then we find that this feeling has, as it were, evaporated for a time from the realm of our direct awareness, but not, of course, from our soul and heart. But experiment with one of the crudest feelings in the same way: pinch your hand until it hurts and then start to analyze how this pain differs from a toothache or a headache — and you will even stop feeling your pain. One German philosopher, suffering torments from the onset of a toothache, managed to stop feeling it in just this way. Thus, if he is not convinced of any definite refutations of the truths of faith, a Christian must not think that he has no faith, although at times this may seem to be so. He must calmly pray and approach the Holy Mysteries, not attaching any significance to his imagination, which only gets stronger if he deliberately fights against it.

8. Fear of Admitting a Sin.

Several spiritual fathers in monasteries have disclosed to me that God has helped them obtain from penitents the admission of sins which they could not bring themselves to confess at previous confessions over the course of ten or twenty years. This had tormented them for their whole lives and they already considered themselves doomed for eternity, knowing that the Church says, “If thou hidest anything from me, thou hast a greater sin; take heed therefore, lest, having come to a physician, thou depart unhealed.” These sins may be very shameful and impure, unnatural sins against the seventh commandment, such as incest, bestiality or corruption of children; all these happen extremely often, and sometimes with people who are respected by those around them. On the other hand, they may be criminal offences: murder, infanticide, theft, robbery, attempted poisoning, malicious slander out of jealousy or envy, inspiring hatred against one’s neighbor, incitement of others against the Church and faith, and so on. If the priest directly poses a question about such a sin, the penitent will probably not deny it, but he cannot bring himself to tell of his offence voluntarily.

However, it is impossible to question each person about such abominable sins. After finishing the usual questions, you should ask in a quiet, gentle voice, “Perhaps there

is some sin which you are ashamed to confess? Perhaps there is something which you could not resolve to say about your sins at earlier confessions, or forgot, and then remembered and did not dare to tell the priest?" It is extremely possible that the parishioner will answer affirmatively, but will still hesitate to say what exactly it was. Sometimes at this moment, people (especially women) start to weep and tremble, they become covered in sweat, but cannot resolve to speak. Then show even greater sympathy and affection and say, "Put aside your shame so that you will not be ashamed at the Dread judgement before everyone. Here, apart from me and the angels, nobody will know anything, and you will not shock your brother the priest by your sin; in a single day we have heard such things that nothing can astonish us any more." If the person confessing still cannot bring himself to say directly what it was, then say to him, "Well, perhaps it will be easier for you to confess if I ask you questions according to the commandments: does your sin concern the seventh commandment against pleasures of the flesh? Or stealing or doing evil to people? Or blaspheming?" and so on. When you are given an answer about the type of sin, then ask what sin it was exactly and enumerate the possibilities. Simple people sometimes cannot even give a name to their sin; then ask descriptively. When the penitent, realizing that you are not fiercely trying to condemn him, but are a friend, suffering with him, finally tells about his offense, do not be horrified or angry, for he has already reproached himself enough. Only lament, asking why he had not spoken of this before, why he had hidden it at his previous confessions: indeed, he could have died without admitting it and his soul have perished forever. *Those who lie at confession usually end their earthly life by suicide.* Let the sinner consider God's mercy towards him, in that He did not deprive him of the possibility of confessing his sin.

Then tell him what penance, and how long an exclusion from the Holy Mysteries is prescribed for this by the canons. But if you see that he is deeply penitent and if the sin was committed long ago, then consider whether you should not let him receive Communion the next day, and demand that he make good the consequences of his sin, either immediately or over the course of time. If he took something unlawfully, he should return it, if he has dishonoured someone, he should make amends, or ask forgiveness; if he has begotten illegitimate children, he should support them, and so on. Then, if he is deeply moved and clearly wishes to free his conscience from the sin, give him a penance. But first ask him if he prays at all or comes to church. If he does neither one nor the other, then of course there will be no sense laying fasts upon him, but give him as a penance a vow to say three or four prayers in the morning and evening and constantly to remember about his fall with repentance before God. If he is a religious person, then give him a rule of prayer or send him on a pilgrimage to a distant monastery, but first find out the circumstances of his life and do not announce the penance like a prophet, but apply healing with intelligence.

We will probably return to penances, but now it is appropriate to mention that *despondency*¹ and *despair* in penitents should be feared no less than stony insensibility.

¹ "Despondency" is a translation of the Russian "uniniye." It could otherwise be rendered "accidie" or "tedium." It implies a feeling of sadness and depression together with the *thought* that one's salvation is in a hopeless situation. "Despair" ("otchayanie") implies a more total abandonment of hope.

These feelings oppress them after sins that cannot be put right, such as infanticide or abortion, causing someone irremediable harm or misfortune, and sometimes people succumb to despondency simply by reason of their own afflictions — the death of children, seen as a punishment from God for former sins, or other perplexing events. Healing spiritual children of these demonic temptations — despondency and despair — is achieved not so much through explaining the truths of God (such as recalling the saving of the Wise Robber on the cross, Zaccheus, the harlot and so on), as by showing brotherly sympathy and compassion. “If I am sorry for you, then will not your Heavenly Father have pity on you? Know, brother, that despondency is from the devil; that is why we pray during Lent with prostrations to the ground that God will not let us descend to despondency. Bear in mind that despondency and despair always have the poison of pride or self-love hidden them, the seed of a certain grumbling and reproach of Providence, which has let one fall into misfortune or sin. Drive away from yourself such embittered² feelings against God or people and admit that you are yourself entirely to blame for having given yourself up to the evil suggestions of the devil or of evil people, and have let yourself slip — that it is not God Who has offended you, but you yourself have offended God, sinned against Him and many times turned away from His all-powerful right hand. Then the heavy stone of embitterment will fall from your heart, and with it despondency will also fall away, and you will raise up prayers of repentance to the Lord with compunction and contrition, and after that joyful thanksgiving.”

9. Self-Justification.

The opposite of despair is carelessness and stony insensibility. People experience this more often and, like despair, it is not easily cured. Of course it borders closely on weak faith, although less decisively than the conscious doubts of a philosopher or reasoner, but it is certainly no less stubborn, if not more so. Leo Tolstoy writes in his *Confession* that he only began to think about questions of conscience and eternity in the fiftieth year of his life, and previously he had not gotten round to this. He lived a “life like a drinking bout,” passing from one attraction to another, and never thought deeply about questions of eternity. Thus in confession people admit to committing adultery, to offending their wives and parents, to deception, to total removal of their life from God’s temple, but so lightheartedly that you will clearly see this means nothing to them, and that they are not even thinking of beginning to struggle with these sins. This is what you must tell them: “Although your sins are serious in themselves and would require exclusion from Holy Communion for so many years — yet more terrible is this stupefaction of your conscience, in the power of which you clearly experience no repentant grief over your sins. You must know that Holy Communion can be given to you only after you promise to hate these sins and begin to struggle with them. Otherwise you will not only not be worthy of

² “Embittered” is a rendering of the Russian “ozlobleny.” It implies a general feeling of antagonism and hostility towards others, including God, together with grief and depression.

Holy Communion (which perhaps will not distress you very much in your present state), but also, you will not remain at your present level of sinfulness. You see, none of the world's evildoers or criminals were born murderers or robbers, but before their first offenses they differed from ordinary sinners only in that they did not take their sins and mistakes to heart at all, did not repent of the offenses they had caused to others, and whenever they were reproached by their elders or comrades they blamed someone else for what had happened, like Adam and Eve after their fall into sin. And so you, while you were innocent, despised adulterers, but after you fell, you began to justify yourself, and then, when you were used to this abomination, you even boasted of it and, going even further, you began to mock those who preserve their chastity. In a similar way the conscience is lulled to sleep by worldly dissipation and corrupt comradeship, and it grows ever deeper and deeper into other sins, desires and passions, and you are soon near to daring calmly to commit criminal offenses."

When he is admonishing such unconcerned people, both during confession and while edifying his flock as a whole, the priest must warn them particularly persistently against the spirit of *self-justification*, which is one of the principal enemies of our salvation. Some people accepted the preaching of our Saviour and His Apostles, and others rejected it. Within both groups there were great sinners and people of righteous life. What were the spiritual qualities which caused them to accept or reject the Gospel of salvation? It was almost always this: whoever had the spirit of self-justification and considered himself a decent enough person rejected the preaching of repentance, the preaching of the Gospel; and whoever considered himself a guilty sinner before God and men accepted it and was saved, like Zaccheus, like the Wise Robber on the cross.

It is the same with Christians who have come to believe. The difference between those who are being saved and those who are perishing, or are far from salvation, lies not so much in the number of their sins, but in the inclination, or lack of it, to admit that they are guilty and sinful. "You feel bitterly offended by your neighbour, you are convinced, and perhaps correctly, that you are being unjustly deprived of your employment or promotion; that you are being slandered, that your merits are unrecognized. Let us agree that this is so. At present it is not possible to demand that you should be completely insensitive towards all this. But, although you take these offenses to heart, remember even more strongly and lament in your soul over the side of these events in which you yourself sinned through laziness, malice, lying, obstinacy and so on. You will not be justified before God by offenses that others commit against you, but you will have to answer for your own guilt, especially if you do not wish to admit to it with repentance. Let the Lord justify you for your repentance; do not justify yourself before Him, but accuse yourself. Once, someone was talking to St. Tikhon of Zadonsk³ and could not find any words with which to oppose his arguments about the faith, so he struck the saint in the face. Then St. Tikhon himself fell at his feet and asked forgiveness for not warning him against such a sin as striking one of God's bishops in the face. Readiness to condemn

³ St. Tikhon of Zadonsk: A famous Russian bishop of the eighteenth century. As the bishop of Voronezh he fought against the extreme ignorance of the local clergy and vestiges of pagan customs among the people. He spent the last years of his life retired to a monastery in great meekness and humility. He is the author of many very widely read spiritual works. See his life in "The Orthodox Word," July-August, 1966.

oneself and not others is a great virtue, which not only exalts people in the eyes of God, but also attracts the hearts of men.” Convince your spiritual children that they must fight above all against the spirit of self-justification and condemnation of others, and explain that if anyone comes to confession in such a spirit he will not receive any benefit from the Holy Mystery. The benefit received from this depends on the degree of contrition of heart. Let no one reassure himself that he is honourable or faithful to his wife or even that he has preserved his virginity. Perhaps he is free from serious falls, but what would he be like if he had undergone such temptations as his fallen brothers have, if he had not received such good influences from people and books and such gifts from God, of which others are deprived? “It is possible that in your condition they would have shown incomparably more of their own good will towards spiritual perfection, and flourished in various virtues and spiritual struggles. Behold those who seem to be poorer than you, and behold those who struggle more earnestly than you for the salvation of their souls and even pour forth constant tears of repentance. If even the great Ephraim the Syrian, who was granted visions from God, wept profusely, then how can we sinners be strangers to a spirit of constant repentance and self-reproach?” Admonish all your flock with such words, but especially those who stand before you at holy confession without repentant contrition. It is possible to be saved without many virtues, says St. Simeon the New Theologian, but nobody has been saved who has not attained a spirit of compunction — that is, of compunctionate repentance for one’s sins and joy over the mercy of God.

10. Spiritual Delusion (Prelest).

Wweak faith and carelessness are expressions of people’s irreligion, but even a pious person is not protected from spiritual sickness if he does not have a wise guide, either a living person or a spiritual writer. This sickness is called *prelest*, or spiritual delusion, imagining oneself to be near to God and to the realm of the divine and supernatural. Even zealous ascetics in monasteries are sometimes subject to this delusion, but of course, lay people who are zealous in outward ascetic struggles undergo it much more frequently. Surpassing their acquaintances in feats of prayer and fasting, they imagine that they are seers of divine visions, or at least of dreams inspired by grace. In all events in their lives they see special, intentional directions from God or their Guardian Angel, and then they start imagining that they are God’s elect, and not infrequently try to foretell the future. The Holy Fathers armed themselves against nothing so fiercely as against this sickness — spiritual delusion.

Prelest endangers a man’s soul if it lurks in him alone; but it is dangerous and imperilling also for the whole of local church life, if a whole society is seized in its grasp, if it makes its appearance anywhere as a spiritual epidemic and the life of a whole parish or diocese is oriented entirely towards it. This is exactly what has happened in the Russian Church, both in Great Russia and in the Ukraine, both among the simple people and in the so-called “enlightened society.” This plague, under various names, began to develop in strength throughout the local Russian Church some thirty years ago, and by the time of the last war it had seized almost all parts of the former Russian Empire in its

grasp. In St. Petersburg, in Moscow and on the lower reaches of the Volga appeared the Johannites, who declared the late Fr. John of Kronstadt⁴ to be a reincarnation of Christ and a certain Matrona Kisileva to be the Mother of God. To replace one Christ,⁵ others appeared — Chursikov in Petrograd, Koloskov in Moscow and Samara, and so on. The Ukraine created Stephan Podgorny, a wanderer who later became a monk and claimed to be God. Podolia and Bessarabia declared a semi-literate and drunken Moldavian hieromonk, Innokenty, to be Christ. In Kiev another uneducated monk called Spiridon, who had attained to the rank of archimandrite during the war, started to preach a new faith. In Siberia Johannism took on an especially fanatical character, and, alas, even on Mt. Athos an extremely harmful movement of delusion, called *imenobozhnichestvo*,⁶ has started spreading.

In high society Rasputin gave himself out as Christ, and the teaching of reincarnation, or neobuddhism, with its extremely easy methods of imaginary communication with the supernatural world, can almost be called the ruling trend of thought in contemporary society. The way was prepared for this by the writings of L. Tolstoy and Vladimir Soloviev. A certain female writer, Schmidt, all but imagined the latter a reincarnation of the Saviour. For a long time now the majority of our writers have been decadents,⁷ and although they are themselves atheists or pantheists, they also give themselves out, with considerable success, as intermediaries with the Godhead or even with the gods.

The war, and especially the revolution, have significantly cooled the ardour both of these self-deluded people and also of those who were consciously and slyly deluding others. But such a spiritual epidemic goes too deep to be completely destroyed even by the most radical political upheavals. This disease will continue, especially because not one people provides such fertile soil for the activity of self-styled seers and prophets as

⁴ Fr. John of Kronstadt: canonized by the Russian Church Outside Russia in 1964, St. John was a man of truly holy life, but the “Johannites” carried their devotion for him to an excess which even caused some to doubt his sanctity.

⁵ i.e., after St. John reposed.

⁶ *Imenobozhnichestvo*: Deification of the name of God — the belief that the Divine essence is present in the name of Jesus uttered in the Jesus Prayer, and that the Jesus Prayer is the only genuine form of monastic activity.

⁷ Decadents: Representatives of a literary movement that appeared at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. They rejected the nineteenth century ideal of realism, preached “art for art’s sake”; “deliberately and consciously they were creating precious poems full of neologisms, sensuous alliterations, and cryptic meanings, while their ethereal prose sketched dreams and exotic or perverse emotions. Their strong anti-social tendency was bolstered by haughty individualism, which often degenerated into narcissism. They had recourse to demonism, drugs and sexual excess in order to enter the ‘artificial paradise’ of hallucinations, mystical flights and hypersensitivity” (*From Chekhov to the Revolution*, by Marc Slonim, p. 84). They included Merezhkovsky, Sologub, Rozhanov, Bely and others.

does the Russian people. The hero of one of Ostrovsky's plays ("There Is Enough Simplicity to Deal with Every Wise Man") said quite correctly that in Russia anyone can give himself out as a prophet, provided that he is not lazy, nor ashamed to do so. No matter how much people are let down by his predictions, they will not stop believing in his special knowledge, but will explain the failure of the prophecy by their own lack of understanding. But the false prophet or christ will have honour, glory and every possible kind of gift heaped upon him as before. Everyone knows how destructive are the consequences of being carried away by this "Khlystism";⁸ it begins with feats of prayer and fasting and ends with shameless depravity, or fornication.

Of course, a spiritual father cannot struggle with this sin or with Khlystism in general in its entirety. He can only advise individual Christians and warn them against falling over this spiritual precipice, as soon as he notices even the slightest inclination towards visions, predictions and things of this sort. Apart from confession itself, he must explain in sermons what delusion and Khlystism are (my circular letter about this was printed in the periodical "Light of Petchersk" in the summer of 1918). If a priest notices that the person confessing to him a Khlyst or a Johannite or, in general, someone inclined towards delusion, then he should briefly explain to him how the devil deludes Christians and even monks by suggesting the thought that they have been granted visions. Then he constantly blinds their conscience, convincing them of their apparent sanctity and promising them the power of working miracles. (These can be illustrated by referring to the life of "Svyatogorets"⁹ about the Holy Mountain Athos, Abba Dorotheus, St. John of the Ladder, or the *Synaxarion*). He leads such ascetics to the summit of a mountain or roof of a church and shows them a fiery chariot on which they will be taken at once to Heaven. The deluded ascetic then steps on to it and falls headlong into the abyss, and is dashed to death without repentance. If the person confessing tells of visions he has seen, then ask him if the person who appeared had a cross with him or blessed him with the sign of the Cross; if not, the visions were all from the devil; this is explained by the fathers and spiritual writers we have just mentioned. The Apostle Paul also wrote that Satan takes the form of an angel of light (I Cor. 11:14). You must also bear in mind that, when the Khlysti find out about this sign for distinguishing true visions from false ones, then, in their future accounts they will be careful to mention that the person who appeared had a cross with him and even blessed them with the cross. However, if you continue raising objections they will not be able to restrain themselves from anger. At this point immediately explain that, according to the teaching of the Fathers, anger or irritation when telling about a vision is a sure sign that the person who saw it is in delusion and

⁸ Khlysti: a sect of flagellants. Ordinary services were held with readings from the Bible, etc., but the secret meetings held at night, for the initiated, progressed from readings and hymns to dances inducing hysteria and trances, and ended in a general sexual orgy, at which both natural and unnatural sexual acts were committed. The word "khlyst," which literally means "whip," was also understood to be a corruption of "Christ" for the members of the sect considered themselves to be "Christs," and their leader, "God."

⁹ Svyatogorets, or "Hagiorite" means "an inhabitant of Mount Athos." This was the pseudonym of a Russian spiritual writer of the Holy Mountain.

that the visions themselves are false. “Angels and demons appear to the saints, but we sinners can only deceive ourselves and others if we recount our ‘visions’.”

In order to open the eyes of a person who has fallen or is falling into delusion, you must show him examples of this fatal sickness taken from the above-mentioned books, and also of its invariable sign — disturbance and even irritability in the face of accusations. Should they be admitted to Communion? If they directly affirm some absurd belief, such as in the divinity of Stephan Podgorny or Matrona Kiseleva, then of course they should not be admitted. But if they offer repentance for all their sins and promise to test their visions or dreams with the sign of the Cross and to conceal nothing from the priest, then they can be admitted.

Twenty years ago, the Russian Holy Synod gave orders for priests to demand that all Khlysts known to them solemnly curse the Khlyst errors, in front of the Cross and Gospels. This was the only means of diagnosing the Khlyst heresy, as its followers are told not to reveal their secrets “either to father or mother or spiritual father.” Only before an actual cursing of the Khlyst heresy will a secret Khlyst hesitate, and then the priest will understand with whom he is dealing and, of course, will not give him absolution of sins or Holy Communion unless he condemns the heresy. However, even an admission of this sort can be obtained from a Khlyst, although not in its entirety. He will swear that he does not belong to any Khlyst society and does not share their errors, but not one word of this can be believed until he has anathematized the main points of the Khlyst heresy. These are set forth in the circular published by the Holy Synod and printed in the “Church Bulletin” (“Tserkovniya Vedomosti”).

11. Sicknesses of the Will and Heart. Anger.

Such, then, are the varied difficulties facing a priest which arise from the convictions of his flock: from their unbelief, weak faith, false beliefs and various types of delusion or, on the other hand, from despondency and despair. Most of these ailments have appeared recently, not more than 50 or 60 years ago, and have spread throughout the Russian Empire only in the last 25 to 30 years. These sicknesses are still almost completely unknown to the other local Orthodox Churches which have been under the power of the Turks.

Now it is time to move on to the discussion of sicknesses of the will and heart, that is to say, the sicknesses of Christians within the society of the Church. (Almost all the sicknesses of the soul which have been mentioned thus far place people outside the Church, and such people have, in effect, to be received back into the Church if they offer repentance.)

The ancient Fathers usually expound the teaching about healing the soul according to the eight or nine basic passions. All the holy teachers of asceticism give an almost identical list of the passions. Such a diagnosis of our spiritual infirmities and approach to healing them is incomparably more correct than the enumeration of sins or sinful acts, which is accepted by the Latins. To wage war only with the sins that make their appearance as actual deeds would be just as unsuccessful as cutting down weeds in a garden instead of digging them up at the root and throwing them out. Sins appear as

inevitable outgrowths from their roots, the passions of the soul. Spiritual fathers must explain to their flocks in their sermons, and especially in the sermon before confession, that their struggle must be waged against the passion itself, against the sinful disposition, and that limiting repentance to sinful acts is far from sufficient. On exactly the same principles, it is impossible to set one's mind at ease by the fact that one allows oneself to commit relatively few sinful acts: Christian perfection consists of constant good inclinations and dispositions, and it is essential to cultivate these in oneself. The Ten Commandments of the Old Testament prohibit sinful deeds, but the Beatitudes of Christ concern not deeds, but dispositions. Of these, surely only peacemaking can be called a deed, but even this is only attainable for those faithful who have nourished their souls with heartfelt good will towards people. The endless dispute of the theologians of Europe as to whether a Christian is saved by faith or by good deeds reveals in both camps a common lack of understanding of our salvation. If these theologians do not wish to learn a correct understanding of this from the Saviour, then the Apostle Paul depicts it even more clearly: "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22). It is not the deeds by themselves that have value in the eyes of God, but the constant state of soul which these words describe. Of course, one must force oneself to perform deeds both of piety and of brotherly love, but their value is only relative, as a means of maintaining and increasing the intensity of one's virtuous and grace-filled state, which will be extinguished without corresponding struggles and inner warfare, like a fire without fuel. Stephan Yavorsky^{xiii} was, therefore, quite correct when he wrote in his *Rock of Faith* that faith, contrary to the teaching of the Protestants, does not of itself compel anyone to do good deeds, except in certain isolated instances. These instances, I will add myself, will be less and less frequently repeated if a Christian does not carry out the two exercises of spiritual warfare or asceticism, self-opposition and self-compulsion: otherwise he will undergo a "shipwreck of faith,"^{xiv} as the Apostle Paul puts it, for only "by works is faith made perfect" (James 2:22). Thus faith is not a "merit," faith by itself does not save, but it is an essential condition for spiritual perfection, through which salvation is attained; and it is in this sense that the Apostle says that without faith it is impossible to please God. Pleasing God consists precisely in these fruits of the spirit, about which St. Paul speaks, and which are cultivated by inner warfare and labours of piety; not by one's own strength alone, but with the assistance of the grace of God, given in *answer* to the prayer of a believer.

A spiritual father must interrogate and advise those coming to confession from this point of view, so that they will understand that they sin against God and their salvation not only by allowing themselves sinful actions or repeating them many times, but also by not being concerned to implant Christian virtues in their souls, and not struggling against the passions which are concealed in the soul and drive it towards sinful thoughts, feelings, words and actions.

Now let us approach more closely the question as to what sort of advice a priest should give to penitents. He must open their eyes to the passions and sinful tendencies arising from them, which will be a constant and unstemmable source of sins until the cause itself is taken away. Thus, for example, a Christian laments to you that she (or he) is constantly quarrelling with the people at home, cannot live in harmony with her husband or other relations and admits that she herself is to blame for this: she constantly "gets cross" whenever her instructions are not fulfilled and whenever she is addressed or

otherwise treated with insufficient respect. In this case it must be explained that she (or he) does not “get cross,” but is angry because of a sinful tendency towards anger, one of the eight chief passions which lead us away from salvation. Once one has realized how sinful and destructive this passion is (for almost none of the world’s most terrible crimes would occur if people did not give themselves up to anger), the first step in healing it is to admit that one is suffering from this passion, or its inception: to admit that one is spiritually sick and needs to be healed. According to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, the second medicine against this passion, as against every other passion, should be our “righteous anger” against the passion that is afflicting us, in this case, against our anger itself. The Creator placed the faculty of anger in us so that we can direct this feeling against our own sins, against passions and the devil, but certainly not for use against our neighbors or enemies. Jesus the son of Sirach says, “The very action of anger is already a fall.” But, of course, these methods of struggle are still insufficient. The passion is weakened by half when this is realized, but it is not killed. It remains to strive gradually after perfect angerlessness. It will be understood that the principal means is to pray about this morning and evening, and also whenever you meet a person with whom you habitually become irritated. Then struggle with the actual appearance of your passion, and if you cannot restrain your tongue from angry and offensive words, then stop the conversation: either go away from the place where it began, or stop talking, or lead the conversation on to another subject. In most cases it will be sufficient for you to do this two or three times for the other person to follow your lead; and the first rays of mutual friendship shining forth will strike the soul with such joy that both will be amazed at themselves, as to why they quarreled and tormented themselves and each other, depriving themselves of the joy of holy friendship. Certainly it is not always possible to remove the spirit of anger and arguing from one’s family or society. It sometimes happens that, at the inspiration of the devil, one of your neighbors becomes even more argumentative when he notices that you have humbled yourself in your heart. Instead of emulating you, he might well be imbued with malicious envy of your meekness, and will become even more daring and increase his malicious words and acts. Then you should know that this cross comes to you from God, and if you cannot go away from such a person or, as it is said in spiritual books, “give place to anger,” then at least try to preserve peace and good will toward such a person, as it says in the Psalm: ‘I was peaceful with those who hated peace.’ Preserve your soul from anger and malicious revenge and give special consideration as to what attitude to take towards your malicious neighbour, praying to God and asking the advice of your superiors. To some people it is not even useful to show a constant and meek submission, especially to a malicious wife or conceited son. One should be punished and the other separated from oneself. God will guide you in this, and if, wishing the best, you make a mistake, you will not be to blame for this before God, provided only that anger did not penetrate into your heart and rule over it.

Angerlessness is a great acquisition: you will obtain a multitude of friends with this gift, both in heaven and on earth. If we thought more about our souls and the value of spiritual gifts, we would understand how much joy the latter obtain for us even on earth in comparison with the material treasures that most people chase after. Thus they forget God and their conscience but, when they have acquired them, all they have is disillusionment.

Angerlessness and the meekness which comes with it is a life-giving light which pours itself out, without any effort on the part of the person bearing it, on those around, and fills them with zeal to emulate it. This very freedom from anger was one of the most important reasons for the spread of Christianity, both in its earliest period and in the lives of the more recent preachers of the faith — Leonty of Rostov, Stephan of Perm and others. This was the meaning of the words of the Saviour, and even earlier, of the Psalmist — “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Ps. 36). But if you do not manage to acquire freedom from anger so successfully, and this passion, to which you have long been enslaved, again and again overcomes you in the form of angry outbursts against your neighbours, then offer tearful repentance over this, lest anger should turn into hatred, the most repulsive sin in God’s eyes: “He who hates his brother is a murderer,” as the Apostle John writes in his first epistle. The most effective medicine against anger and irritability, although it is also the most bitter at the first draught, is to ask forgiveness after a quarrel. It is bitter for human pride but, if it is bitter, hasten even more to make use of it, for it is bitter only for the proud, and if it seems so intolerable to you, then know that you have within you yet another serious disease, pride. Sit down and think over your own soul, and pray that the Lord help you to master yourself and to ask forgiveness and peace from the person you have offended, even if he is more to blame than you.

Is it necessary to speak of the joyful fruits of such a victory over yourself and over the devil? Once your heart has been softened, how easy it will be the second time, even without any struggle to ask forgiveness! This is like the ability to swim: until a person has made himself to float on the water and swim it seems impossible to him; he is terrified and struggles with himself. But when he has swum even once, he will subsequently jump in and swim without any fear. Pay attention also to the opposite side of things: if you do not make peace with your neighbour, your prayers will be in vain and your repentance fruitless, and receiving Communion will be to your judgement. This is why a priest must unfailingly ask all those coming to confession whether they harbor any malice against their neighbors and if they have made peace with all those with whom they have quarreled — or, if unable to see them personally, if they have made peace with them in their hearts. Explain at this point that on Mount Athos spiritual fathers not only do not permit monks who bear malice against their neighbour to serve in church or commune the Holy Mysteries; but also, when they read their rule of prayer, they have to omit from the Lord’s Prayer the words “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” so as not to be liars before God. Thus the monk is made to realize that he is no longer a Christian, if he cannot even say the Lord’s Prayer.

12. Pride and Vainglory.

We have already mentioned that anger is often linked with another passion — pride. Now we will go so far as to say that anger does not often appear as an independent or fundamental passion in the human heart. Most often anger expresses the dissatisfaction of another passion, or even of the casual desires that a person may have from time to time. In the latter case, anger is called impatience or obstinacy, which in turn are expressions of

a general self-love, lack of brotherly love and lack of desire to attend to oneself and struggle with oneself. The stronger a passion is in a person, the quicker and more fiercely it turns into anger when it is not satisfied. Thus the vainglorious and lovers of money become envious, the lustful become jealous, the gluttonous become over-critical and irritable, and so on. In general, anger is an indication of various sinful passions, and one can find out about these by noticing when a person begins to get angry: if it is during a conversation about fasting and sobriety, then he sins with the passion of overeating and drunkenness; if it is on occasions when he loses money — love of money; if during talks about the saints' feats of humility — he is proud, and so on. This is why we began our instructions to spiritual fathers with the struggle against anger, as it is an involuntary indicator of other passions. A person's enslavement to them is expressed first of all as enslavement to anger, which bursts out even with very cunning people who are otherwise able to hide their passions and keep quiet about their bad habits.

Perhaps it will seem to the reader that we have spoken too long about anger and its sinfulness; but here we have also given some indications about struggle with all passions in general, and so perhaps we will be able to express our thoughts about other passions more briefly. However, we must forestall one objection that priests will probably raise: "Is it possible, even in a confession lasting ten minutes, to enter into such depths of the human soul? People talk about their sins, sinful deeds, and am I going to explain to them about passions?" Yes, explain this to them beforehand in sermons, then at confession they will understand what you mean from only a few words. These subjects are very close and comprehensible to the soul of an Orthodox Christian, even of an illiterate one. But it should be understood that in confession, since it is so short, you should say as much as you can manage, and leave the rest for sermons in church (without personal allusions, of course) — and for private conversations with your parishioners. Here it is a great thing if you can direct the spiritual gaze of your parishioner into his soul and its infirmities — its sinful passions, dispositions, and not to deeds alone.

While adducing reasons for the struggle with the passions of anger and malice, we touched on pride and vainglory, which are closely linked with them. However, this enemy of God and our salvation will not be crushed unless the warrior of Christ, having come to his spiritual father with repentance, is given a weapon aimed precisely at this enemy. With our contemporaries, educated and half-educated and, of late, even with the uneducated, the sin of pride does not appear as a fall, a stumbling, but it is their constant state. Consequently they do not consider it to be a sin. But what are "noble self-love," "a feeling of one's own worth," "honor" — if not this pride which is repugnant to God. People call these feelings "noble pride," "lawful pride," but there is only one sort of pride — demonic. The Elder Makary of the Optina Hermitage explained this to a landlord, who was bewailing to him that his son had married a serf girl, and thus offended the "noble pride" of the whole family. I have written and spoken much against this spiritual blindness which, alas, has even made its way into textbooks of moral theology and adduces an uncomprehending reference to the words of St. Paul, who said that it would be better for him to die than that any man should make his glorying void (1 Cor. 9:15). But anyone who has taken the trouble to read this statement will see that the glory is here understood to be from God, and that in the future life.

Of course, it is not only our contemporaries who suffer from pride: only the saints are free of it, but those of Adam's descendents who have not crucified their passions bear

this burden in themselves and have to struggle with it until they are freed from its weight. But the disaster of our contemporaries is that they do not consider it to be a sin, although it is cursed by God — just as those deeply sunk in a life of dissolution do not consider either lust or adultery to be sins. On the contrary, if a young person is distinguished by a forgiving nature and does not seek revenge on those who offend him, he not infrequently has reproaches and mockery hurled at him even by his own parents, being called a worthless person who does not even defend his own honor. Probably our own contemporaries would treat Christ the Savior with the same contempt, as well as the Apostles and Martyrs who uncomplainingly endured beatings and every kind of humiliation.

A spiritual father must at least try to ensure that the penitent recognizes as sinful every word and act instigated by this feeling. There are two different kinds of pride — vainglory and inner or spiritual pride. The first passion seeks after human praise and fame but the second, a subtler and more dangerous feeling, makes people so full of confidence about their own virtues that they do not even wish to seek human praise, but are satisfied by the pleasure of contemplating their own imagined virtues. Of this type are Byronism^{xv} as well as Mephistopheles^{xvi} and the demons beloved by European writers.

Vainglory is the more amusing feeling, in that people laugh at it, and so it is easier, if not to overcome it, then at least to understand that it is shameful and start struggling with it. But how? The penitent should be reminded of Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount, when He said that the struggles of a vainglorious man are not pleasing to God (Mt., Ch. 6); and also of the condemnation of the Pharisees (in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew). This is the way in which thoughtless people who do not notice the sinfulness of their motives should be brought to their senses. But we must also be very careful about something of which, alas, we take no care at all, and this applies not just to spiritual fathers but to all members of the clergy. We must be very careful that we ourselves do not motivate people with vainglory, especially those giving money to the Church. Indeed, we cannot but admit that a good half of the most abundant offerings on which churches, schools, orphanages and hospitals are built, are made at the instigation of vainglory, stirred up in rich people by the clergy, not infrequently even those in bishop's orders. Vainglory which has been humbled or is struggling with humility in the soul of a Christian, deserves incomparably greater condolence or heartfelt sympathy. Frequently people who are reverent and humble-hearted will confess to you that they are haunted by thoughts of vainglory when making donations, serving the sick, or even when showing a good, loving attitude towards them, and finally, when they sing or read well in church and people praise them for it; when they preach sermons, study diligently at school, and so on, and so on. Often good monks, noticing such thoughts in themselves, ask their elder's or spiritual father's permission to stop their useful service on the kliros (i.e. singing and reading) or in the altar; and lay people — to stop their social and philanthropic activities.

This, of course, was one of the principal motives that hermits had in refusing to be made bishops and even fleeing from people when they became famous among them. For this same reason even now several educated archimandrites refuse to become bishops, and monks refuse to be ordained to the priesthood. What, then, should a spiritual father say when a Christian puts forward such ideas? Exactly the same answer as the famous elders of Optina, Makary and Amvrossy, gave to such a question. One should not refuse

an obedience which is useful to the Church, in accordance with God's commandments and to which you are called by your superiors and by the gifts that God has given you. Do a useful job, and as for the thoughts of vainglory which force their way into your heart, reproach yourself and oppose them — but not by abandoning the job. Carry on with the useful work, but not with the sinful thought, even when the work demands one thing and the thought demands the opposite, which will unfailingly happen soon and frequently. Not only the Lord, but also people who observe life intelligently can always see who is genuinely working for the sake of what has to be done and who is working out of vainglory: which teacher is loving towards his pupils, trying to inspire them to labour and struggles, and which is trying to obtain glory for himself or, as they say, "popularity": which writer is writing for the triumph of right and in order to teach people what is good, and which is writing to please the crowd, for his own vainglory and "for filthy lucre's sake" (Titus 1:11). And so teach people to test their consciences after every special feat and even after every obligatory labour; for example, was the motive of vainglory present during prayer, and to what extent? Then offer repentance for this sin, but do not abandon the work. If he does this, a Christian will soon see that he often has to choose between the demands of his work (and duty) and the demands of vainglory, that he must constantly choose the first and suppress the second. Besides this, as he becomes strengthened in struggling for the good, a Christian is gradually freed from self-love in general and, consequently, from all kinds of vainglory.

What should be said to people who are proud in the strict sense of the word, who think so highly of themselves that they do not even seek praise from people? "What are you proud of: your mind, beauty, noble birth, talents? But surely all this is not from yourself, but from the Creator, and the Creator can take all this away from you, as He has taken away everything from the "great" people in the present revolution. But what is most terrible of all, He can take away even your mind. Remember Nebuchadnezzar's punishment^{xvii} and humble yourself before God, before the fate of Napoleon and Wilhelm overtakes you. And let every Christian who excels above others in something keep a watch on himself and struggle with every kind of self-exultation, remembering his sins and passions and the humble dispositions of the Holy Apostles and others who pleased God. It is useful to mention an account like this from the *Spiritual Meadow* (or another patristic book). "I saw," recounts an elder, "in a monastery a brother who was still young, but renowned for his struggles and for his gentleness. Before my eyes he was offended and even insulted, but he calmly kept silent throughout and even the expression of his face did not change in the slightest. 'Brother, who taught you to be so gentle?' I asked, moved to compunction.

'Are they really worth my anger?' he answered. 'These are not people, they are just beautiful dogs, and they are not worthy of my being upset by them'. Then my joy (continues the elder) changed into deep grief for this perishing brother, and I went away from him in horror, praying for him and for myself."

It is also necessary to fight against pride by acts which are opposed to it. It is especially important in this case to force oneself, as we have said, to ask forgiveness of those we have offended, and also to bear punishments at school uncomplainingly.

13. The Seventh Commandment.

It is hardly necessary to mention that a priest has to listen to the confession of sins against chastity more than any other kind of sin, and give corresponding advice as to how to struggle with it. In these times, when unbelief is triumphant and the faith is despised, only people who want to save their souls come to confession.^{xviii} Many, if not the majority of these courageous souls who remain faithful to God and the Church, have humbled themselves before the Lord, do not offend anyone, and try to do good. Such Christians, who of their own accord are going towards God, are usually free from malice, love of money and envy, but they are still pursued by temptations of the flesh, even in monasteries and hermitages. If they are free from the enticements of female beauty and alluring female society, then sinful desires make their appearance in the form of the crudest animal lust, or if the Christian separates himself completely from women, as temptation to secret and unnatural sins. These inclinations will not depart from such a Christian, or even from an ascetic who struggles intensely with himself and hates the sin from the very depths of his soul, ardently desiring to lead a perfectly chaste life. It is futile to think that marriage completely frees people from this struggle. Even here one has to restrain oneself, when one's wife is pregnant or ill, or when one is temporarily separated from her on business matters and so on; these occasions tempt both spouses with thoughts of an illicit liaison with another person. Besides this there are various forms of excess within the bonds of marriage. This is why there are more questions and penances in the *Trebnik* concerning unchastity than there are about any other sin.

Let us differentiate between sinners according to the degree of their repentance and the essence of the sins themselves. Let us begin with those who are tormented with pangs of conscience but cannot resolve to admit their sin. This happens particularly often if the priest knows them and takes them for honourable women, men, girls and boys. Similarly, novices in convents are often ashamed to confess these sins to their spiritual fathers; husbands and wives are ashamed to confess marital infidelity, girls and women are ashamed to confess to abortions and also to unnatural sins, which are now extremely widespread in all strata of society. Still, it is a greater sin to conceal sins at confession: as we have already said, many guilty of this sin end their earthly life by suicide. There is also another side to the evil of such concealment — until the Christian confesses his fall, he will return to the sin again and again and gradually fall into total despair or, on the contrary, into shamelessness and godlessness, and will stop coming to confession altogether. So, however difficult it may be for a priest to ask questions about such things, he must never let anyone depart from the confessional if he has grounds to suspect him of concealment, until he has obtained a full confession. It is no pleasure for us to write these lines or this chapter, but we are well aware how inexperienced priests are in their work, what mistakes they make in evaluating sins and giving advice about struggling against them, and so we are compelled to write about them; what can be said we will say directly, and concerning the rest we will give references in the canons.

Thus, if a youth or girl tells you that he (or she) has not committed the sin of fornication, then ask if he has not committed another sin, near to this, which also violates the seventh commandment. At this point, not infrequently people become agitated, blush,

start breathing heavily and sometimes burst into tears. The lesser sins of this type are, from a worldly point of view, objects of agonizing shame, but the greater ones, fornication and adultery,^{xix} are often things to boast about. Even Leo Tolstoy points out these two phenomena in his *Kreutzer Sonata*.

Very, very many children are guilty of secret sins — catechism teachers in St. Petersburg told me that seventy-five percent of all children have committed them: but, when interrogating their spiritual children, priests must be very careful not to give any information about the methods of performing such acts to children who are completely innocent and ignorant of these obscenities. When children are already deeply wallowing in such filthy habits, it can be seen in their faces. Their eyes are dull, their cheeks and hands seem to be damp, and the center of the face, that is the lower part of the forehead and upper part of the cheeks together with the eyes, seems to be almost dead, as if a grey mask were covering the face of the child or adolescent.^{xx} Sometimes they let themselves commit these sinful acts without even knowing that it is a sin and will destroy their health. Begin by asking them whether they read indecent books or like looking at dirty pictures, whether they let their fingers touch what they should not, and so on. If the adolescent, boy or girl, sees that you are speaking with sympathy, and not just in order to scold or humiliate him, then he will probably forestall your further questions; even though it torments him inwardly, he will not spare himself, but recount his sins to you. Listen to him calmly and patiently; do not get indignant if you hear something unexpected — mutual masturbation, sodomy, incest, bestiality. These things happen when children or even adolescents do not know what is sinful and what is not. They see what animals do and try to imitate them, and then, if they do not meet soon enough a spiritual father who would be capable of hearing their confession, the sin weighs on their hearts like a heavy stone. To begin with they will keep silent about it out of ignorance, and later, after growing up and so acquiring self-love, they will simply be ashamed to admit their stupid acts, but at the same time will think they are defiled for the whole of their lives, and acquire a depressed and irritable cast of soul. But this is not the end of their spiritual disaster: another thought tells them, “For better or worse you have already committed sodomy or incest, so there is nothing to stop you committing lesser sins such as fornication.” Thus the young soul wastes away, not having found any spiritual support.

And so, dear priest, when you find out what sin your spiritual child has committed and he knows how bad it was, give him advice, taking into account whether he is near to despair or, on the contrary, extremely unconcerned. In the first case point out to him from the *Trebnik* that the sin which is habitual among children and adolescents, although repugnant to God, is not punished by anything like the heavy penance for adultery. Also, sins, even very serious ones, committed through ignorance when one is very young, are not considered to be serious provided that they are not later repeated knowingly. Finally, explain to them that the repulsive sin of sodomy, of which many almost innocent boys and adolescents mistakenly consider themselves guilty, is far from being what they have really committed half consciously or even quite unconsciously. They had probably fallen into the sin mentioned in the 29th and 30th rules of the Nomocanon;^{xxi} the more serious one is mentioned in rules 28, 185 and 186, where the differing degrees of guilt are also explained. Unfortunately even most priests do not know this, so they give people, such as novices in convents, who have confessed to the lesser sin, the same penance which is

prescribed for the most serious one. Consequently, concealment of sins at confession in women's monasteries occurs not infrequently.

And so, when the young soul, stricken with shame and despondency, stands before you after making his confession, console him as God helps you to — console him, but also keep him from falling again. Tell him that you, or other elders, have known many people who were long enslaved to a sinful habit, but in the end were completely freed from it by the Mysteries of Repentance and Holy Communion. Say also that when one is not yet grown up, it is not the human body which attracts one to sin, since it is not yet mature enough for this, but rather the perverted fantasy of the soul. Therefore if he turns his soul away from the sin and hates it, his body will not attract him to evil; but if he lingers in his sin, then, when he is a grown man (or woman), he will prove to be bound with doubly heavy bonds, since then the sexual demands of the body will be added to the passionate desires of the soul. The sin will gain in strength, falls will become more frequent, and God's punishment will not be slow in coming, in the form of tuberculosis or neurasthenia, incapability of leading a married life or even idiocy and epilepsy.

Impress pictures of this sort particularly strongly on those young people who live among comrades of the same type and so take their sins very lightly. You must explain to them that the sins, especially those of the flesh, which their conscience tolerates so easily will not remain at their present level of sinfulness, but will draw them into worse ones and even criminal offences. Neither those perverted people who corrupt children and lie with animals, nor prostitutes nor inverters were born as such, but they fell by degrees into the bottomless abyss of their iniquities. In their early youth they had committed the same comparatively small sins as others of their own age who later lived as honourable people and good Christians. What distinguished them from the latter was that they did not repent of their falls, laughed at the warnings they were given and did not reproach themselves for their sins. Later, after they had become hardened in their sins, they had to offer late but fruitless repentance, in a body rotting with syphilis, as inmates of mental homes or as drunkards, the dregs of society, incapable of any work, or finally as aged prostitutes, thrown out of all homes and shelters for the poor. "Now, while you are still so young, it will not be difficult for you to avoid this terrible fate if you will hate both your sins and your frivolous attitude and start fighting with these habits, which are already in their inception. Besides this, consider how attractive and beautiful is the type of person who has not yet succumbed to these temptations. They have a fresh appearance, youthful face, a bold and calm look in their eyes. How thankful they are to God that they overcame this temptation in good time."

How then should you start fighting with these sins? — In varying ways, depending on whether you sin by yourself, secretly from everyone else, or together with some other person. In the latter case, first of all you must decisively and sharply cut off all relations with your allies in sin. Inform them of this directly and openly, and be prepared to put up with mockery and insults. They will soon give you up — for good — since they will also be afraid of shame before society or punishment. When the soul has offered repentance and been sanctified by the mysteries, is praying and desiring to lead a pure life, it cannot return to its sinful deed at once, without preparatory, intermediate steps.

"If you commit this sin by yourself, then above all you must fear its initial step. The ascetics advise us unflinchingly, morning and evening, to collect our thoughts, to recall

our own principal passion, our main hindrance to salvation, to hate it in the soul and, after putting oneself into such a disposition, to say the following three times, consciously and without hurrying: ‘Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep me this day (or night) without sin’. And on this day and during this night God will unfailingly protect you, if you said the prayer sincerely and without wavering.”

We mentioned the “first step” of sin. What does it consist of? Of self-deception. Sin would not dominate the soul of man if he had not been taught to take refuge in lying to himself. This is why the devil is even called in the Word of God “a liar and the father of lies.” This is so not only in the case of the corrupt habit we are now describing, but also with even the smallest passionate habits as well as with drug-addiction and even more so with drunkenness. A person who is subject to them struggles inwardly, but at the same time deceives himself with thoughts such as: “I will not commit my foul sin today, but I will just allow myself to bring it to mind in more detail: What was it like last time?” Or “I’ll just let myself read that dirty little book once more,” “I’ll go and watch the pretty girls pass by in the street this evening,” or “I’ll go and see such and such a cabaret show.” All of this is dangerous and harmful even for a chaste soul, but a soul which has already been infected by a sinful habit can only avoid succumbing to it again as long as it resolutely keeps away from all temptations and does not reproduce around itself those conditions in which it usually falls into sin. Thus, for some sinners it is the company of certain people that is disastrous, while for others, on the contrary, remaining alone is disastrous. When you are in a vigilant and virtuous mood, admit to yourself that such and such thoughts, states of soul and body, objects, books, spectacles and sometimes even smells will irresistibly draw you into sin and that you cannot fight with the latter if you give yourself up to this first step: and that your decision to stop after this first step and not go further is a self-deception, since you cannot stay on this step once you have stepped onto it. In exactly the same way, one can only give up smoking or taking morphine by thrusting these drugs away from oneself completely and refusing even to touch them.

However, even this is not enough by itself. In order to cleanse a soul which has been choked up by a foul sensual passion, its energies must be devoted to better, ennobling occupations — to work, physical or intellectual, which is inspiring. Then, one must be surrounded by ennobling society or by the friendship of virtuous companions, or a close and open relationship with an elder relative, perhaps one’s own mother. But, most important of all, we must draw nearer to our Heavenly Father and seek His help through prayer. In these circumstances, a spiritual father can hope for success if he advises the penitent to buy a prayer book. In other circumstances no adolescent would obey you, but in his grief and shame he will obey; if possible, give him the prayer book yourself. It is to the point to add that members of the clergy often cannot imagine what it means for a lay person to have a prayer book. Priests who come from clerical families are often under the impression that a prayer book is just as indispensable in every home as a table and chair. They should realize that in the vast majority of households of the cultured classes, and also of villagers, there is neither a New Testament nor a prayer book, and that the latter is a wonderful thing with a deep spiritual significance for our contemporary society, wildly estranged as it is from the faith. Perhaps its owner will not pray from it every day: perhaps whole months will go by without anyone in the family touching it, but if even a few times in a year someone takes it in his hands and reads something from it, even that

will pour a beneficent light into darkened souls. And besides this, they will probably pray from it from time to time, and in general come to know the Church's prayers.

If the feelings of the young sinners we have just been describing are distressed and dispirited, then to the same degree shameless and far from feelings of repentance are the relations of somewhat older youths with loose girls or dissolute women of more mature years who tempt them into sin. We have already mentioned that among students, such moral falls occur at the same time as their loss of faith. Among the youth of the countryside they are accompanied by a falling-off of piety and outbursts of blasphemy and, in recent years, by such bold denials as with students. Let us examine this grievous link between unchastity and unbelief more attentively. When the male organism matures, a feeling of self-satisfaction is aroused in the young man. This is strengthened by the change in the youth's social position: He becomes an independent member of society — a student; or, as a senior schoolboy, he is preparing to become one — to enter this totally uninhibited group of youth. In student society he feels like a bridegroom — he is no longer under the constant supervision of his parents, he earns some money for himself. In general, his conditions of life favour the development of a feeling of self-satisfaction. The newly aroused sexual passion on its part has also something in common with this feeling, and now he wants to live without any restriction; mentally he says to himself, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, . . . and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes." But the words which follow in Ecclesiastes will be revealed to him by the voice of his conscience even if he has never read them, and will cause him intense irritability and will arouse a feeling of enmity against God and against religion. Here are these words: "But know, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement" (Ch. 11, v.9). Admittedly, it is not so much the future judgement that terrifies and angers him, as an awareness that his sins are forbidden, condemned by both God and his parents and elders, and that they are punished often by nature itself in the form of venereal diseases, which threaten their victims with physical deformity as well as madness. However, because of his triumphant self-satisfaction he is not at all inclined to be penetrated with awareness of his guilt and sinfulness, and so he finds himself in opposition to God, the Church, the priest, his elders, the convictions of society and decency. This gives birth to nihilism among the intelligentsia and hooliganism among the simple people. To suppress the voice of their conscience more successfully, young people turn to drink, foul language and sometimes even blasphemy, as well as an insolent attitude towards their elders, in order to defend themselves on all sides from the stirrings of conscience. But the most valuable service to sin is rendered by books which deny the truths of our holy faith and mock them. Together with books and pictures and immoral shows, and aided by comradeship with utterly dissolute and unbelieving people, these instruments of self-stupefaction are yet another reason why young people are forgetting the way to God's Church and their spiritual fathers. But this is not all. The Revolution has created yet another means for finally putting one's conscience to sleep: inflicting brutal punishment, torture and mockery of innocent people together with crudely blaspheming against the holy things of the Church and the prayer of believers. Although these ghastly crimes horrified the whole world, there were still plenty of people eager to carry them out, inspired, no doubt, by nothing other than the desire to silence the voice of their conscience, mercilessly flogging them, and be freed of it forever. It is this incentive which, although sometimes almost unrecognized, compels young men and women as well as older people avidly to seek out

and read everything that is printed against God, the Church and God's commandments, and angrily to turn away from every book or talk offered to their attention in defense of the truths of faith. So it is not surprising that young people listen with such confidence and without any proof to their more self-confident friends and even doctors who have lost their conscience and say that acts of lust are inescapable necessities for a physically mature person, and that if these demands are not satisfied one will become ill or go insane.

But if any like-minded youth, speaking self-confidently and authoritatively, has his eyes opened to his real spiritual state, full of self-deception and the lowest motivations, he will not even listen to all that you have to say, but will interrupt you with crude abuse or sneering derision. What should a spiritual father do with him? Of course, it is certainly not possible or profitable in all circumstances even to start a conversation with him about matters of faith and conscience. But here we are primarily considering talks at confession. These "lambs for the slaughter" will not come to confession at all unless it is with repentance, spurred on to it, for example, by illness which is the scourge of dissolute living, or else in a state of severe spiritual conflict, horrified by some atrocity they have committed or by a misfortune or disaster, such as the suicide or infanticide of a girl they have deceived, or through fear of some legal punishment, or under the influence of a freely awakened conscience, or, finally, in special circumstances such as getting married or going off to war. In all cases of this sort the profligate youth or girl who has gone astray will have become morally sober to a certain extent and so be capable of listening to and taking to heart what you say, if it is full of love and compassion.

We shall not develop in any more detail what we have already said about the connection between unbelief and dissolute living — now we shall speak of how to struggle with the latter. First of all, the sinner must be convinced that debauchery is *not* an essential necessity for a human being. Every priest knows a considerable number of people who have preserved their virginity until marriage and who did not get married until they were considerably older than the person confessing was when he lost his innocence. Priests also know people who have preserved their virginity until death and were still perfectly healthy.

The concept of "the needs of the body" is extremely vague, and the border line between them and simple lust is extremely difficult to fix. Let us take, for example, a need which is quite undisputed — that of food. The power it has over one is very closely connected with one's *convictions*. A prisoner can be starved to death in three or four days if he is locked up without food, but those who fast of their own free will can go for a whole week or more without eating. A person's ideas about undernourishment and sufferings from undernourishment will also be determined by whether he is used to eating well and without his wishes being thwarted, and without being prepared, or even wishing to struggle in prayer and fasting.

We must distinguish sufferings caused by the body itself from sufferings which come from the realm of the soul, from dissatisfaction or anger at being unable to obtain what is pleasant, according to one's choice and desires . . . The second type of suffering is incomparably harder to bear than the first type, even when the purely physical sufferings are negligible. If physical suffering makes itself felt, but the person acknowledges that it is legitimate and profitable to bear it, then his suffering is not at all severe, it is hardly felt at all and soon passes away of its own accord. You put on a

“mustard plaster”^{xxii} and it seems to be burning your whole skin, but since you know that it will make you better by evening, you will not be tormented in your soul by these sufferings, but will be prepared to keep it on for longer. Suppose, on the contrary, that you have a headache, the children are disturbing you by loud talking and, besides this, you are extremely irritated by their inconsiderateness. It will seem as if your head is about to split open with pain, and the growing feeling of anger, which would cause suffering by itself, appears even greater when added to the sum of unpleasant sensations. But then those who are causing the irritation suddenly remember that they are disturbing you, become ashamed of themselves and approach you kindly, asking for forgiveness. They touch your heart with their purity and gentleness and cheer you up so that you can hardly feel your headache any more.

If purely physical sensations and needs are closely connected with the desires and moods of a person’s soul, then sexual life is far more closely connected with them. Why is it that this desire, apparently so strong, will desert even the healthiest and youngest men when they are in deep grief or extremely worried or preoccupied by something? Thus it is not so much in the body, as in the soul. Of course, a person who is used to following his every desire, without rules for distinguishing lawful desires from unlawful and impure ones, giving himself up to foul and pleasure-loving fantasies and seeking out everywhere impressions that will stimulate them — such a person, of course, considers sexual passion a most oppressive demand, and takes dissatisfaction of his lust as a terrible suffering. But surely a vain person hardly suffers less if he does not obtain his stars of glory at the expected time. Are we then going to say that receiving stars of glory is a human need? And so it is not virginal life; but depraved fantasies and refusal to be reconciled with some deprivation which are the real causes of these sufferings, supposedly physical, which the fornicator uses to justify his depravity. But do virgins who are chaste in the soul really not undergo any sufferings? It is possible that they sometimes feel a certain heaviness in the head, but all this easily passes deep sleep, if the person’s soul remains free from subjugation impure desires and is filled with the wish to preserve purity of conscience at whatever price in terms of privations.

By explaining these truths to penitents a spiritual father will benefit them considerably even if he does not manage to prevent them from falling into sin again, since he will at least have made them aware of the sinfulness of their life and put an end to the unconcerned and self-confident disposition they were in previously. In addition, it is essential to point out to them that those who have relations with prostitutes are helping to bring about the slow moral and physical death of these unfortunate creatures. Similarly, adulterers and seducers bring misfortune on entire households and are often guilty of infanticide or abortion, which is treated the same as infanticide by the rules of the Ecumenical Councils and for which the guilty woman and other people involved are doomed to deprivation of Holy Communion for from ten to twenty years. If this crime has now become fashionable, this does not in any way lessen its guilt.

The field of possible warnings and advice to fornicators is, of course, very wide, as these sins destroy the soul of man, making him cold and unconcerned about loftier questions and aspirations; they also destroy both the family and society. To enumerate all these disasters in full would be impossible, and even without that we have spent a very long time on this question. One thing we must add is that unrestrained single people should be advised to contract a lawful marriage. When they object and refer to their

precarious financial position, point out that licentiousness does more to ruin people than a family does, and that even if one has to undergo poverty for the sake of a family, a pure conscience is more valuable than a self-centered prosperity poisoned by debauchery.^{xxiii}

A spiritual father must even more persistently make spouses who are unfaithful to each other and deceive each other ashamed of themselves and bring them to their senses. They should be reminded of the words of Christ: “As ye would that men should do unto you, so do ye likewise unto them”^{xxiv}. Would such people be pleased if their spouse were as unfaithful to them as they are to their spouses? However natural it might seem to ask such a question of one’s conscience, in fact adulterers and adulteresses rarely put it to themselves. Equally rarely do they think of the corrupting influence their deeds will have or are already having on their children: children who have lost respect for their parents often almost entirely lose the ability to distinguish between what is permitted and what is sinful, what is honourable and what is dishonourable, and grow up to be scoundrels and villains. The terrible words of our Savior about those who offend one of “these little ones” are well known.^{xxv}

Concluding our discussion about fighting with this sin, let us consider how one should answer a sinner who asks how to free himself from it. All that was said about struggle with secret sins and those of youth should be recalled here, as all this can also be applied to grown people. Let them also stop believing in worldly stories and novels, according to which illicit love for another person’s wife, for example, or another person’s husband or a close relative is represented as a kind of involuntary possession with which it is supposedly impossible to struggle. All this is a lie, and all these “love-affairs” are the fruit of a corrupted or idle imagination which was unknown to our ancestors, who were not educated from novels, but from sacred books. It is necessary to fill one’s soul with different, better things, to love Christ, the homeland, studies, school and how much more, to love the Church, one’s parents and one’s companions in the work to which one’s life is dedicated, and to choose as a companion for one’s life a woman with whom one can form a marital union and bring tip children. “Consider all other love inadmissible if you want to save your soul; and if you have an inclination to save your soul, then fight against it resolutely. First of all, immediately put an end to any such acquaintanceship, unconditionally and forever. In order to rescue oneself from an already rooted passion it is necessary to move to a different place, leave one’s teaching duties, not answer letters and occupy one’s hands with intelligent work, having one’s parents and friends around one.” These, of course, are the most general principles of struggle with oneself, but circumstances can be so varied that the resolution of difficulties of this sort has to be left to the discretion of the priest himself.

In any event a priest must explain that, according to canon 72 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council and the 52nd Nomocanon, mixed marriages are absolutely unlawful, as are marriages within the forbidden degrees.^{xxvi} It is true that brides and grooms of this sort have little respect for the Church canons, but they should be warned that marriages like this are extremely unstable and, especially in recent times, often end in divorce — as soon as there is any quarrel or misunderstanding between the spouses, they come to realize that their marriage is illicit. It is only a deep awareness of the holiness of the marital bond that compels the spouses to yield to each other’s wishes and so preserve their union. But when the husband and wife realize that their union is not sacred and is even cursed by the Church, there will, of course, be no motive left for the preservation of

their union once their feelings for each other have waned, after the inevitable quarrels, and the spouses have become a burden to each other. However, if a priest is respected by the couple, he can persuade the heterodox spouse to become Orthodox without too much difficulty: after explaining to them in general terms the reasons why he should do so, it can then be pointed out how impossible it is to bring up children in customs and convictions foreign either to their father or their mother.

14. Drunkenness.

The sister of debauchery is drunkenness, and in the words of St. Basil the Great, “wine has never been a friend of chastity.” However, the vice of drinking is related not only to sexual depravity, but to all crimes in general. By far the majority of crimes are committed by people who are either drunk, or at least a little tipsy. A large proportion of all family tragedies, individual woes and social disasters originate from wine and drunkenness.

The priest’s first concern in all parishes must be to disprove the notion that drunkenness is not really a sin or vice at all. The most obvious consideration here is that it does not like to continue in a mild form, but without fail it turns gradually into constant heavy drinking. Besides this, and even more importantly, it is essential to convince penitents of the fact that intoxication, especially when it goes as far as drinking bouts, is never simply a bad habit, but is always combined with a constantly malicious disposition of soul. Is this really so? Do we not on the contrary, meet such good, compassionate and considerate people, who seem to be the best of people when they are sober, and would appear to be saints were it not for their bouts of drinking, lasting as much as two weeks, which occur several times a year? But it seems like this only to a superficial observer. Anyone who knows such people more closely will tell you either that they are full of lustful desires, to which they cannot give themselves up when sober, or, as is more often the case, that they are possessed by an unsatisfied love of honour, or bitterness over an unsuccessful life, or else they are tormented by malice and envy. Being unable to realize their desires openly, they make use of drink in order to transfer themselves to a dream world. They stupify themselves with wine and then imagine themselves to be generals, ministers, famous intellectuals or artists or successful lovers; as being victorious over their enemies and taking revenge on them. Let drunkards therefore not make the usual excuse when they are reproached: “I drink, but then I don’t offend anyone, I don’t take money from anyone unjustly, I don’t spread gossip or start arguments” and so on. In their souls they always have the poison of malice, envy, discontent or adultery and, until they kill such desires in themselves, they will not be able to give up their hard drinking. Drunkenness is an indirect manifestation of other passions, of which the victims themselves are often not fully aware. It is, however, impossible to be healed of this sickness until the passion which is causing it is expelled from the heart. This of course concerns really hard drinking. When young people go on drinking sprees it is usually either in order to get up courage for a sexual orgy or to prove to themselves that they are already grown men — preposterous though such a method of proof may be. When people repent of sins like this, besides explaining what a ridiculous “proof” this is, advise them to keep away from their drunken company and find some sober companions. In general, until drunkenness begins to turn into hard drinking, and provided it has not grown out of

some passion deeply rooted in the soul, a person offering sincere repentance for it can always be freed from it with God's help.

Drunkenness is one of the most harmful passions for our Orthodox people,^{xxvii} if not the most harmful. Therefore, besides giving drunkards advice about struggling with their passion, a priest must give advice or rather, make demands of parents and those educating children as to how to forestall it. They must not give vodka (spirits) to children or adolescents, must not appear even slightly drunk in their presence, must not boast of drunkenness or praise drunkards and drunkenness. It is a good practice to give a penance, if only to do prostrations by themselves, to all sinners who have had so much to drink that they have lost consciousness, become quarrelsome, or ill.

Although it is important to impress on drunkards the ruinous consequences of drinking, I do not think it is really necessary to explain how to do so, as every priest, even a young one, will be able to do it. But I would remind them that it is more useful not just to be satisfied with a general picture of the harm caused by drinking, but also to ask the person confessing about the conditions of his family life and work, and then say something which concerns very closely his own life and the life of his family. Of course, a spiritual father will in this case be in a stronger position if he personally knows his spiritual son and his family and so can point out the actual consequences of his intemperate life, or what may easily happen in the circumstances of his personal and family life.

Nevertheless, almost the most difficult thing at confession is to teach a drunkard who has lost control of himself to give up his evil habit. Surely masturbation is the only other vice which is as difficult to dig up from the heart as drunkenness, if it has taken root so deeply that it completely overpowers man's will.

We have said that drinking bouts are able to hold people in their ignominious captivity because they are united with a spiritual passion and malice. This is true, but it also happens that the captive has also come to hate the passion itself, has already humbled himself in his soul and is asking God and men to teach him how to be delivered from it — but still he cannot get out of it. Maybe he has already joined a temperance society and sworn an oath not to drink vodka or wine, but has even broken his oath. What is his spiritual father to do then?

It will be useful to remind the penitent of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and ask him: "Why was the father of the lost youth so convinced of his amendment that he prepared a feast with singing, dancing and, of course, wine, without being afraid that it would start his son on another binge after his involuntary hunger and sobriety?"

"Because," you must answer, "in the first place, the Prodigal Son punished himself: he sentenced himself to the position of a hired servant, expressed his intention to become a slave instead of a master. Secondly, in order to fulfill this good resolution, he had undertaken the podvig of a long and difficult journey and the podvig of abasing himself and supplicating his father, although previously he had found it burdensome to live with his father in plenty and kindness, as he had a self-willed and unsubmissive soul.

In exactly the same way, if the Lord expressed Himself so confidently about Zaccheus — "Now is salvation come unto this house" — it was precisely because Zaccheus of his own accord, and without waiting for any demands to be made, sentenced himself to a complete mortification of his passion. He promised to perform a feat very difficult for a lover of possessions — to give away half his property and repay fourfold

those he had defrauded. There is a hope of correction for dypsomaniacs if they go to live for a whole winter at the Valaam^{xxviii} Monastery on Lake Ladoga, where it is impossible to procure vodka, and condemn themselves to an obedience involving heavy labour, even if they are rich. However, it is said that even if people do this one can be fully confident of their self-correction only if they have stopped drinking for three years. Before this, there is only a good and joyful hope.

It is understood that not every penitent can manage to go away to a monastery for even six months. To those who cannot do this, it should be explained that, for repentance to be lasting, it must be, firstly, performed with self-reproach and without grumbling against others as being responsible for one's fall. Secondly, there must be a resolution to submit oneself to deprivations and labours that are yet harder and more bitter than those to which one has already been subjected by this vice, such as poverty or illness, or loss of one's job. The difference between powerless and incorrigible people, on the one hand, whining about their passion and position in life and, on the other, those who have resolved without fail to raise themselves up with God's help from their fall, is clear for all to see. Before you is an official or clerk who has lost his job for drunkenness. When asking for employment, although admitting his "weakness," he will prove that it has been exaggerated considerably in his reference, and that his comrades who drank more than he did were not dismissed, because they were protected and were not opposed by people wishing them evil, as he was. Now he is asking for a position which, despite being in the provinces, is no worse than the one he had before, and perhaps even better. Another, however, comes to you and tells you frankly that he was dismissed and admits that the dismissal was fair. He asks for the most modest duties: a man with a university education asks to be taken on as a clerk and a man who had formerly earned five times as much as a steward or bailiff asks for a job as a yard-keeper. In both cases the applicant asks to be taken on only until his first misdemeanor, and even asks not to be given anything better until he gives concrete proof of his reform. When there is repentance and resolution like this, there is already hope. When giving these examples, the spiritual father should explain to the drunkard that his soul is like a person so ill that he has to submit to a severe operation, even amputation of arms or legs, so as to avoid rotting alive. "Similarly, it is essential for you to amputate your self-love: perhaps this will involve changing your position in society, giving yourself up to heavy labour and a subordinate status for a time. But after this you will be completely free of your shameful vice, and return boldly and joyfully to your family and close friends. You must start by hating your fall and carry on hating it until death itself. And I know people who were enslaved to the demon of drink for a long time, but later were delivered from it altogether by means of such hard struggles."

15. Despondency.^{xxix}

The main part of our task is already finished. It consisted, in the first place, of opening the eyes of priests themselves to the nature of that great work which is entrusted to them when the grace of the priesthood is conferred upon them. Secondly, it was to make those coming to confession aware of their spiritual state and of the implications which their

Christian vocation has for life. Following the directions we have given, a priest can make his spiritual children understand once and for all that Christians are obliged not only to recall their individual sinful acts at confession, but also to find out what passions and false ideas infect their souls. They have to struggle with the very roots of their sins, i.e. struggle with their passions, and know that this is how we work out our salvation: to be more precise, without this, salvation is impossible. The struggle is to be carried out by constantly raising one's soul to God through prayer, reading His word and forcing oneself to virtue. These ideas have to be inculcated both through sermons and through the advice given to each penitent individually at confession.

Every Christian should know that he is spiritually sick, that his spiritual diseases must be cured, since if left to themselves they will not remain at the level they were at when first noticed, but will eat away the soul more and more, until they have destroyed it altogether. If only a penitent understands this, his spiritual father can thank God on his account and say, "Now is salvation come unto this house." From now on, even if he has moral stumblings, this person will always know that the only thing of any value on the earth is the soul and its eternal salvation. He will evaluate all events and phenomena in his own life and the life surrounding him from this point of view, even if through the weakness of his will he strays from the right path for a time.

Besides this, and even more importantly, our aim in explaining all this has been to lead the mind and soul of the spiritual father into this realm of spiritual struggle and spiritual life. If we have achieved this even for a few spiritual fathers, then in their future life and activity they will be able to fill in everything that we have left out. The human soul is so complex and many-sided that it is impossible to foresee everything that might arise in the course of healing it with the same precision as is possible with the healing of bodily ailments. Even with the latter it is impossible to foresee absolutely all the possible complications that might arise. We have analyzed as far as we could the most violent passions: anger, pride, vainglory, lust, drunkenness. We have also considered various false views on religion and life in general which prevent repentance. We have not yet looked at the passions of love of money, gluttony, envy, and, to a certain extent, despondency. We will say a few words about these, then go on to consider individual~sins that are especially common among contemporary Christians.

We could discuss despondency in the same way we have treated the other passions, but this sin, which was examined so profoundly by the Holy Fathers, has its place mostly among people already struggling for their salvation. With lay people it is most often expressed as embitterment and irritability, and often in drinking bouts. But of course willful despondency is sometimes encountered. This is a loss of that spiritual joy of living which is nourished by hope in God's merciful providence concerning us. Of course, there are not many among our contemporaries who preserve this hope in their hearts, and the majority do not think of God at all. But even among religious people, taking care over their salvation, one meets some who complain that they have lost their love for prayer and now perform it without any spiritual enjoyment or even find it tedious. This tedium is apt to turn into a constantly melancholy state of soul and is combined with the thought that God has abandoned them. Together with this, and sometimes even independently of it, it seems to them that their close relatives have stopped loving them and that they are completely alone in life. A wise answer from the priest, if given with heartfelt sympathy, sometimes heals Christians of this spiritual

illness at once. The victim himself usually cannot understand what is really wrong with him. The real cause is usually one of two things: either the despondency is the consequence of a forgotten fall into sin or of a hidden, unnoticed passion, or it is simply a case of so-called depression — i.e. exhaustion or oppressing worries. Of course, the priest must ask him closely about all this. He must begin by asking if it is due to the second cause, so as not to complete the discouragement of a soul that is already sad enough. We have already discussed despair, but despondency is something different — it is a less acute feeling, but it submits less easily to advice and encouragement. We have just mentioned depression. This is a phenomenon relating to the realms of the soul and of the body. Thus, with some it is due mainly to a nervous disorder, while with others it is caused by gloomy thoughts and bitter feelings. In all cases both of these disorders — grief of soul and ill-health of the body — mutually support each other and do not easily submit to exhortations or healing. This state occurs especially often among student youth and with women before childbirth and also, doctors have told me, in late middle-age.

Heartfelt sympathy is the principal means of making such a soul better, but this sympathy must have a calm, confident and manly character. If it is shown by a mother, wife or other female relative who gives way too much to her own feelings, then the person who is sick in the soul, noticing his power over them, will give vent yet more frequently to his outbursts of grief and simply torment those around him with his whims. Gentle but firm loving kindness will calm and encourage a depressed person, but grieving compassion and persistent entreaties to take this or that medicine, take a bath or go for a walk, will disturb him yet more. The tears of those around him will increase his own tears and grief. But let us return to confession.

So, when a person comes to confession and complains of his inconsolable grief and sadness, his spiritual father must ask him lovingly if he sleeps well at night, has a good appetite, gets irritated without any cause. If the replies are discouraging, then he should say: “We have gone over the physical factors which contribute to your sorrowful state of mind, but it is not just a question of these: let us go on to consider the spiritual causes. However, it will be easier to deal with these if we first eliminate the purely physical factors. Even your doctor will probably tell you that it is essential for you to take a rest from study from work for a time, even if only for a month. Leave town, perhaps go on a pilgrimage, but without laying too much fasting on yourself. If you do this it is possible that your despondency will go away of its own accord. If you go away from your family and close friends for a time, you will stop imagining, as you do now, that they do not love you any more, that you are a burden to them and so on. While you are away you will understand that you often needlessly tormented both yourself and them. When you return to them after having a rest and getting stronger, you will laugh at yourself as you remember the unfounded suspicions you had earlier.

If a despondent Christian is especially zealous in feats of prayer and fasting, ask him how he struggles and if his struggles are self-imposed — undertaken without the blessing of a spiritual father or elder — then remind him that the Holy Fathers wrote not a little about “despondency proceeding from self-imposed and excessive struggles.” Advise him to put aside for a time all or part of that which is in addition to the struggle obligatory for all Christians — that he himself has introduced into his life. Perhaps the penitent will further begin to lament that even the prayers and vigils that are obligatory for all, which formerly used to bring him joy, he now carries out impatiently and

unhappily and he cannot get back his former compunction. In this case tell him that the fathers ascribe such a state to a secretly conceived passion, just as Saul was driven to a melancholy state by the passion of envy. The passions of lust, love of honour, love of money, vainglory and the passionate desire for revenge have this effect when they have been conceived in the soul but remain unnoticed, being still at the early stages. If a boat will not move off from the harbor, you look to see if it is still moored to the dock lower down, below the water-line, and you do not start rowing until you have cast off. In the same way, a Christian whose prayers have become dry and who is giving himself up to despondency must look into the depths of his soul, and if he finds that the scourge of any sinful desire has laid hold of him, he must start struggling with it. But in this case even before he has defeated it, the spirit of prayer will return to him even more fervently than before, just because of his resolve to fight with the evil within himself. Together with this the spirit of despondency will also depart from the struggler — admittedly, not always at once or in one hour, but the state of the soul can be compared to a sea subsiding after a storm. The sea rages and roars as it is tossed about by the wind (wind is the cause of storms at sea). Now the wind has calmed down, but the sea does not become calm in one second, although it does so very soon. Now the waves are getting smaller and smaller, then there are only ripples left. A little later the sea has become as smooth as a mirror.

Suppose that the person confessing says, “I have taken the advice you have given me already, but I am being distraught by disasters which do not depend on me — my family offends me, my children are ill and one of them has died recently. I do not find consolation anywhere or in anything and I cannot pray — I am overcome by grief. I know that God does everything for our good, and that evil for us is not poverty or disasters but only our evil will. But what am I to do, when grief and sadness are gnawing at my soul and I cannot find any consolation anywhere?” In this case ask him: “And have you sought consolation or have you, on the contrary, rejected it? You remember the words in the Scriptures, “Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted,”^{xxx} and how Jacob would not be comforted over the supposed death of his son Joseph. Despondency is especially sinful when it rejects God’s consolation. When a capricious child gets cross he breaks his favourite toys, and some abnormal people find satisfaction in aggravating small wounds on their hands and so causing themselves pointless suffering. In such a state of soul a sinful feeling is already playing a part, insubmission to Providence and anger, if not directly against God, then at least opposed to God, approaching grumbling. You must fear this state and ask God’s forgiveness and help. Then the spirit of despondency will depart from you, and your soul will no longer turn away from consolation. The exhortations of your close ones and their very sympathy seemed inept to you and they themselves stupid and burdensome. In this case value holy love even in a stupid person, and turn a kind face to him. He will take it as a kind deed done to himself that you do not reject his sympathy: see how much humility and patience he has and how much better he is than you, who are tormenting him and others with your sadness; and how easy it is for you to replace this common torment with common joy and mutual love. If you try to act like this, you will drive the spirit of despondency away from yourself altogether, and will begin to imbue your soul with the spirit of humility, patience, love and non-condemnation, and then you will even learn to console others in distress and grief.” With explanations and consolations such as these a spiritual father must bring to his senses a Christian who is subject to the demon of despondency. Once

again, we repeat that the extent to which his words will be successful depends entirely on how much heartening sympathy he himself feels and puts into his words. Despondency is a sort of emptying or withering of the soul, and the compassionate love of a healthy soul, continuing in union with God, can fill up that emptiness in the sick soul. Sometimes simply a kind word and promise to pray for the grieving person immediately pours joy into his soul and he is freed from the oppressive feeling of loneliness.

16. Envy.

We mentioned Saul, whose whole soul was swallowed up by his envy for David. This envy destroyed his gift for statesmanship and in the end his life itself. For envy our Lord Jesus Christ was given up to trial and punishment by His enemies. This is a foul and sinful feeling, but a penitent can hardly hide this passion from his own conscience, so if he does not wish knowingly to lie at confession he will admit, when asked by the priest, to being overpowered by temptations to envy. The priest will point out the two examples mentioned above and say that “Through the envy of the devil is sin come into the world,” as is explained in the Wisdom of Solomon. Warn him that envy is joined to the yet more repulsive feeling of gloating over the misfortunes of others, and is linked with some other sinful passion — vainglory, self-interest, or ambitiousness and so is directed against one’s adversary in a way corresponding to this passion. In order to vanquish envy, not only must the actual envy be opposed, but also those fundamental self-loving passions of the soul from which it is born. “If you subdue the promptings of ambition in yourself, then you will not envy a comrade or fellow worker who is more successful than you. If you do not love money, you will not envy your neighbour when he gets rich.”

At the same time explain to the penitent the senselessness of malicious envy: “If you think that the boss has not been fair to you but has, in your view, promoted an unworthy person out of stupidity or prejudice, then it is not the person who has received the promotion, but the boss himself who has given cause for dissatisfaction. If you think that your comrade has won over the boss or the crowd by dishonourable means and deception, then why did you not complain about him before, and why did your complaints and anger get stronger only when he was promoted unjustly? Surely you see that the deceit and pretense of which he is guilty are just as shameful whether he is successful or not. So do not justify your envy as if it were righteous indignation. You would probably not harbour such feelings if this person was not, as it were, your rival. Perhaps you yourself wish to be freed from the envy which is tormenting you, but still cannot get free of it? To begin with, stop deceiving yourself and take a sincere look at the source of this feeling. It arises from self-love, from a desire for riches and glory, and all this is extremely sinful. You should desire for yourself only salvation in Heaven, and on earth, patience and a pure conscience. If his passion is once let into the soul, then even if you become angry with it with holy wrath and struggle with it, it will even influence your thoughts, making you interpret all the acts and words of the person who wishes you ill or whom you envy, in a bad sense.”

With the development of parliamentary government and political parties and the corresponding fall of truthfulness, people now form their opinions about one another —

both good and critical ones — not in accordance with their real impressions, but depending entirely on their political party's attitude to the other person's party. Such injustice, such dishonesty of thought, must be recognized as a shameful phenomenon, and every Christian must keep himself from forming, at every temptation, a biased opinion of his neighbour based on envy or malice and not on the truth. Such a precaution should be the first step in struggling with the passion of envy, which is nourished by malicious plotting on the part of the envious person against his rival. When it does not obtain this food, the very passion of envy will gradually die away, especially if the tempted person resolves unflinchingly to verify dispassionately all his opinions about his neighbours, restraining all feelings of hostility.

And further, Reverend Father, exhort your flock not to miss an opportunity to recognize or mention all the good things that can truly be said about their rivals. If they follow this path, not only will they expel all envy from their own hearts, but also they will come to a state where they will not consider anyone to be their rival or enemy.

17. Love of Money.

A priest who has devoted himself to the service of God willingly, and not from extraneous motives, tends to think of all Christians who are accomplishing their salvation (i.e. coming to confession) as people wishing to devote their lives to perfecting themselves spiritually and so are engaged in struggling only with their remaining sinful passions: pride, lust and anger. It is therefore very difficult for him to understand a person who, although he both believes and is mindful of the future life and avoids serious sins, yet has other gods apart from the true God. Such are lovers of money — hard-hearted misers and covetous of material gain. Although disturbances of anger, self-love and lust frequently draw a man away from God, yet they burst into the soul as blind outbursts, as enemies attacking it against its will. Avarice and meanness, however, are not blind, stormy outbursts, but represent a calm, consciously held attitude of mind and direction of will. How can they remain in the soul of a Christian as he listens to Christ foretelling His Dread Judgement and to His many statements about the impossibility of salvation for those who hope in riches? Nevertheless, for many pious people who love the Church and live in a sober fashion, enrichment is often the guiding aim in all their activity, for all their life. These are not infrequently people with a strong will and self-control — characteristics required both for maintaining a pious life in the Church and for acquiring riches. Let us recall the rich youth in the Gospel: *“All these things have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?”* Perhaps a rich heir can “keep all these things” (i.e. fulfill the commandments), but one engaged in making or multiplying riches, or a miser, is of course unable to do so. Such a person must unflinchingly have turned away those in need, not helped his kinsfolk, not supported the Church, cast his business partners into poverty — in short, been heartless and harsh.

How can this be combined with piety? Naturally, by means of a self-deception which suggests the thought that it is absolutely essential for the good of the family to increase one's wealth and guard the family inheritance stingily. Or, it may inspire one to reinterpret all the words of our faith which condemn love of money in a sense favourable

to oneself, or attempt to prove that all those in need and asking for one's help are idlers and drunkards. In order to calm his conscience, such a person sometimes makes donations to the Church or to good causes, but such are trifles in comparison with what he has obtained by wronging his neighbors so that he cannot altogether calm himself, but is just trying to deceive himself. Therefore he is anxious and irritable, capricious and despotic, like the heroes of our writers: Ostrovsky, Gorbunov and others. A businessman in the south of Russia built a large, splendid church and summoned his old uncle to admire the wonderful structure. "Yes, it's a big, splendid church," said the old man, "it'll hold a lot of people; but still, not so many as you've fleeced and cheated: you could never get all of them into this big church."

The old man could talk like that, but it is hard for a spiritual father to do the same, and this is not only because he must not condemn and discredit those few donors and benefactors who still exist in our sinful times. There is another reason: it is not easy to draw the line between keeping riches, which is permitted, and enslavement to the passion of avarice, which is forbidden. Industry and trade are necessities for the nation and for society, and they will only flourish through the efforts of strong manufacturers and traders. Their zealous work for the nation and state is combined with increasing their own wealth, and if they were to renounce the desire to get rich, they would hardly be likely to devote their thoughts and efforts to making their enterprises flourish. Almost the same applies to the owners of small estates and even to ordinary farmers. Of course, if he shows willingness to do so, the priest will not seek to restrain him from acting like Matthew the publican and the sons of Zebedee — leaving his business and following the Lord, to a monastery, for example. But we must remember that the Lord gave this command (it was a command, and certainly not advice, as our miserable commentaries have it) — to the rich youth only when it turned out that he was subduing the passions in himself and was following God's commandments in everything, and consequently was spiritually mature enough to step onto the path of total dedication to God and the Church (*"and come and follow Me"*).^{xxx1}

But what is to be done with people who are well-intentioned but still not strangers to the passion of avarice and are involved in an enterprise connected with the increase of their earthly well-being?

Of course, when parishioners have a lucid conscience and themselves admit their subjection to the passion of avarice, the priest must talk to them directly about it. But misers and lovers of money who do not realise their sinful state must first be questioned about the obviously sinful deeds and acts which self-interested people usually commit. They are enumerated in the catechism^{xxxii} at the exposition of the second commandment. When the person confessing admits to cheating a few times in business or doing a partner a bad turn, or refusing to help a widowed relative or a student nephew, then ask him why he acted so dishonestly and harshly. Does this mean that his wish to increase or preserve his property has already become a passion for the sake of which he is losing the voice of conscience? Let him not think that this does not stop him seeming to be a good person and Christian. Judas — (it is especially useful to mention Judas in these cases) — was also a man of prayer and a believer; he even healed the infirm and the possessed as the other Apostles did (Luke 9:6, 10:17): but he succumbed to the passion of avarice, and to what depths did he then descend? Was it not of him that the Lord said, *"Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed: it were better for that man if he had not been*

born,” and again, “*Have I not chosen twelve, but one of you is a devil?*” And so, “Behold, O lover of money, this man through money came to hang himself. Flee the insatiable desire which dared to do such things to the Master.”^{xxxiii}

It is extremely important that the lover of money should realize that he is in the hands of a pernicious passion. If a priest achieves this, he has done something more difficult than convincing a fornicator, a drunkard or an angry person of this. These passions clearly show themselves for what they are by their hideous consequences, but self-interest is a passion with an aura of respectability, which not infrequently conceals itself from its victims. “What? Have I got to give away everything and become a beggar?” asks the perplexed sinner. “No, the time for that has not yet come. First you must come to hate your passion, and then, when it prevents you from doing an act of generosity by threatening you with ruin, trample it down; do this, to begin with, at least in those cases where, on considering the matter calmly, you realize that you will not suffer any ruin. When you have done the good deed, ask yourself if you have not obtained a different kind of profit, better than money. Has not at least a part of the joy you have given to the other person been passed on to you also? Is not your heart gladdened with a sweet hope when you are able to apply to yourself those eloquent, exceptional petitions which the Church makes on behalf of those who have given to her: “Sanctify those who love the beauty of Thy house; glorify them with Thy divine power.”^{xxxiv} The Church calls church-builders “blessed” and “ever-memorable” even during their life, as well as after death. Do not hate those who ask your help, but rather your pernicious passion. You will not be ruined by benevolence, but meanness and self-interest make a man hateful for all those around him, not excluding his own family. You can start doing good to your neighbour simply by not avoiding it in those cases where it will not hinder or put a stop to your business, but there can be no such limitations when it is a question of ceasing to do evil to your neighbours. Even if it seems that without deceiving people or ruining your rival you cannot even put your business matters straight; that you will incur a considerable loss of property if you do not permit yourself to do some dishonest practice; then doom yourself to loss, even to ruin, rather than increase your possessions to the accompaniment of the tears and curses of your neighbours and criminal acts in general, if you do not wish to be like Judas. Let not the words of St. John Chrysostom fall upon you: “A rich man is a robber or the son of a robber.” A spiritual father should strictly condemn robbers and revolutionaries, reminding them of the tenth commandment and the rule of the Nomocanon, according to which a thief or robber must return what he has stolen and add a fifth part of the value. Even then he can only receive Communion after two years have passed, but those who have seized Church property are not to communicate for fifteen years (Rules 46, 47, 49, 50 and others).

Robbers of Church property are subject to excommunication. About deceptions and extortion which one is supposedly forced to commit through fear of one’s own ruin, you must point out that no official or squire or judge is justified in breaking his oath through fear of people or of poverty. In the same way, if a trader or land-owner cannot preserve his prosperity without deceit or causing disaster to his adversary, let him doom himself to loss or even ruin, but not fall short of the demands of honesty.

Concluding our talk about the struggle with avarice we will say that the priest, in advising his parishioner to overcome it by works or almsgiving, should advise him not only to throw pennies to beggars and cadgers, but also of his own initiative to help those

whom he knows to be in need, even if they are not dying of hunger. If he has the time and enthusiasm, he can seek out cases of need and verify them. Only by helping others can a Christian increase in himself the virtue of brotherly love and turn his heart away from avarice. The priest must be especially careful about advising people to give money to the Church and benevolent institutions, so as not to give them cause to suspect him of self-interest and thus deprive all his exhortations of their force.

The examples we have given here of spiritual exhortations against various passions do not, of course, exhaust all the possible means of curing them: that would provide enough material to fill a thick book. Of the passions indicated by the fathers we have left gluttony, sloth, and idle-talking without detailed examination, but what are we to say about such secondary sins when “*From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it: but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment*” (Is. 1:6). Of course, it is fitting to talk also about these at confession, but we will limit ourselves to giving directions for the healing of more pressing spiritual sicknesses, in the form of separate sins and falls into sin.

18. Particular (Individual) Sins.

Sometimes a new spiritual father finds it difficult to enumerate sins; i.e., he simply cannot remember the most important and most frequent falls into sin. Unfortunately, although they often have the service books before their eyes, our theologians and clergy rarely favour with their attention that part which is printed in red ink, nor even the part printed in black except the prayers themselves, and they never read a good half even of these.

A full enough list of all possible sins can be compiled from the following parts of the *Trebnik* and prayer book: 1) The rite of confession; 2) The evening prayer to the Holy Spirit; 3) The last of the evening prayers, “I confess to Thee, the One God worshipped in Trinity...”; 4) The fourth of the prayers before Holy Communion, “As if standing before Thine awesome and impartial judgement seat;” and 5), lastly, a pamphlet entitled *A General Confession of Sins* by St. Dimitry of Rostov. This last contains the most detailed and well thought out list. Of course, a spiritual father cannot question every parishioner about each of these sins, but he can read through the list beforehand and then choose which questions to ask, adapting himself to the age, sex and attitude of the person confessing. Not long ago (in 1914) the Kiev Caves Monastery published a separate pamphlet in very large print called *The Order of Confession*, which contains both the above mentioned work of St. Dimitry and the full rite of Confession, and also other questions which may be put to penitents. This pamphlet can perfectly well be used in place of the above mentioned sources.^{xxxv}

Before turning to instructions for the curing of individual sins, let us ask ourselves what to do with those Christians who recognize that their sins are reprehensible, but put off struggling with them indefinitely. Although they are not completely cast down into stony insensibility like those impenitent sinners about whom we wrote earlier,^{xxxvi} they do not wish to struggle with their sins yet, thinking or even declaring aloud that they will

still manage to repent. Even when people's minds are not dominated by a persistent, conscious attitude of this sort, the vast majority still have such an attitude concealed in their subconscious and may be dominated by this. It results in an unconcerned attitude in which they return again and again to their foul deeds, and in the complacent feeling with which they come, although not often, to God's church and even to confession. They do not seek to justify themselves in any way, but seem to be convinced that under no circumstances will they be deprived of eternal salvation, but will without fail correct their lives some day and somehow. It is almost exactly these characteristics that our literary classics, in the persons of Pushkin, Turgenev and Leo Tolstoy, ascribe to those in whom they wish to depict the principal type of Russian intellectual. Even among the simple people there are not a few such types, especially those who have left the patriarchal family life and made contact with new conditions of life. What needs to be instilled into such people? The fear of God? Sometimes (although, of course, not always), it is sufficient to cite the following statement from St. Cyril of Alexandria's homily "Concerning the Departure of the Soul and the Second Coming" (in the combined Psalter and Book of Hours — The Service Psalter): "Those who say, we shall sin in our youth and repent in our old age, are tempted and deceived by the demons, for as they are sinning voluntarily, they shall not be vouchsafed repentance, and in their youth shall be reaped by the sickle of death, as Ammon, the King of Israel, who angered God with his evil designs and foul thoughts."

It is useful to corroborate this with an example from life around us. I, for example, have known several Lutherans who were favourably disposed towards our Church, but were putting off Holy Chrismation^{xxxvii} until retirement or terminal illness; this decision being prompted by the devil who deluded them with the fear that it would be said of them that they had converted out of self-interest(!) They all died without managing to get out of the clutches of their heresy. The same thing often happens with Christians who have resolved to receive the monastic tonsure, but gradually put it off year after year. In ancient times pagans wishing to become Christians fell into the same error and similarly died without repentance. St. John Chrysostom and other contemporary Church Fathers condemned and exhorted these people with particular persistence. Besides this, it must be impressed upon those who are putting off a decisive correction of their lives that the desire to repent and the fear of God will not grow if they postpone their conversion. On the contrary, these will grow dim, and at the same time new passions will be born and will grow in their carefree hearts, like thorns choking the wheat. The soul becomes hardened and callous, and even if it is not taken from the body in its youth, after tarrying over repentance while still young, in its old age it will cleave even more avidly to the allurements of this life and will become altogether inaccessible to resolute repentance.

The most undesirable type of confession occurs when a person, who may be free of offences and perhaps of coarse passions also, nevertheless approaches it without bitter reproaches of conscience. Such a person says to himself, "It is impossible to live sinlessly. I have sinned and, of course, I will sin, not on purpose, but through weakness, but it can't really be otherwise. Why should I be particularly grievous over the sins I have committed, when I know that tomorrow I shall start doing just the same things? I don't deny the mystery of Holy Communion, but I receive it only out of obedience to Christian doctrine; I do not openly feel any benefit for my soul, and probably never will feel any. Everything that is condemned in the Gospel I accept to be a sin: I am not lying when I

answer the priest “Sinful,”^{xxxviii} but I think that if these two mysteries did not exist I would probably be no better and no worse than I am now, receiving them every year or four times a year.” Many people feel like this, although they do not all express such an attitude openly, and not all of them would be able to, especially the uneducated. In pointing out this attitude to confession, we are not contradicting what we said at the beginning of our counsel to spiritual fathers: those who come to confession receive their words as the words of God, and a Christian is never so receptive to good influences as he is during the minutes of confession.

This indifferent and dismal attitude is formed in a layman’s soul because of the inexperience of his spiritual father, who has been unable to awaken pangs of conscience in him, nor make him aware that he is a terrible sinner before God and his neighbors. From what has been said above, it follows that this awakening is attained by revealing to the sinner his dominating passion, which he often — one may even say, in most cases — does not even suspect to be in himself. But a long confession would be necessary for this, and as yet the facilities for such confessions have not been organized, so the spiritual father often has to restrict himself either to listening to the penitents’ own admissions, or to asking questions about individual sins. How can he awaken a deep feeling of guiltiness in the penitent, and a firm resolve to start struggling with himself and concern himself about the salvation of his soul? Indeed, this is especially difficult if the person has not deliberately committed any criminal act, but still does not positively strive towards God and virtue.

In situations like this a spiritual father will be fulfilling his task if he opens the penitent’s eyes to those sins which he does not notice or consider to be at all important, but which really cause much evil to his neighbors or are strictly condemned by the teaching of Christ. Passing on now to the consideration of individual sins, we suggest that it is with sins of this sort that the pastor should begin his questions. What exactly are these questions to be?

To begin with, when the penitent declares that he is a believer, the priest can ask him, “Have you hidden this because of false shame and fear before people? You know, during the time of the martyrs those Christians who renounced the faith of Christ and did not confess the Lord Jesus Christ, from fear of tortures and death, were excommunicated from the Church for twenty years. However, those who acted thus not out of the danger of the death penalty, but because of earthly consideration or from fear of mockery, were excommunicated for their whole lives and were only received back into the Church and given Holy Communion at the very end of their lives, or passed their days in constant lamentation over their denial, like the Apostle Peter, who poured out tears of repentance every time the cock crowed during the night, throughout the whole of his life. ‘Whosoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this generation . . .’”

Of course, if the priest personally knows the person who has come to confession, and knows that he has committed this particular sin, his question can be more insistent and he can talk at greater length about it. But even if he does not know the penitent and the latter does not of his own accord remember any occasions when he directly and intentionally concealed his faith and represented himself as an irreligious person, the priest can still explain to him that these formidable words of Christ refer not only to those who directly renounce the faith, but also to those who are ashamed to confess it. Those who conceal from their acquaintances that they go to Church and prepare for Communion

by prayer and fasting are guilty of this sin, as are those who are ashamed to make the sign of the cross before eating or when passing a church, not wanting people to know that they are believers. It is useful to remind him that the Moslems say even more prayers when they are among “unbelievers” (e.g. on the decks of ships). They pray with special zeal when the passengers heap ridicule on them, for they consider that bearing this mockery is a feat especially pleasing to Allah.

If all this is said with love, so that the sinner understands that the priest wants not to abase him, but to open his eyes to the state of his own soul, it will make him stop and think. It besides this, he admits that he concealed sins at previous confessions — either this particular sin or others, as a consequence of either false shame or extreme negligence and forgetfulness — then the priest’s exhortations will probably lead even a frivolous soul out of its sinfully carefree state, and this will be the beginning of the change of the person’s whole inner life. He will come to understand that he is a great sinner, that he has forgotten his Redeemer and is more worthy of condemnation from God and people than is a person who is ashamed to admit his relationship to poor parents or other relatives and has thus deserved general contempt.

19. Sins Against One’s Neighbour.

Ask the person confessing whether his conscience does not accuse him either of some crude outrage or insult against his parents or else of constantly offending them in small ways. Let him not think that this is an everyday triviality in family life. The Lord said to Moses, “*He that curses his father or mother shall surely be put to death*” (Ex. 21:16). This death sentence for one who reviles his parents is confirmed by the Saviour as being a commandment of God (Mt. 15:4; Mk. 7:10), although not in the sense of a criminal law concerning the death penalty, but in the sense that it is a mortal sin. This then is what the priest should say to an adolescent who is guilty of this: “When you grow older and, perhaps, bury your parents, then, believe me, on remembering such occasions, even while by yourself, you will blush from shame right up to your ears and wring your hands, wishing in vain to make amends for the sin which now seems so insignificant to you. For, although you cannot understand it now, when an insolent son or daughter grieves his loving parents with malicious words or rude disobedience, it is like thrusting a sharp knife into their breasts. You will understand this when you have your own children, but then in all probability it will be too late to wipe out your guilt before your deceased parents.” The same thing, or nearly so, is experienced by teachers when their pupils are insolent to them; as a result of this, many become embittered and the sacred task of teaching becomes a torment both for the teachers and for the pupils. However, it is much easier for the latter to change this situation for the better, than it is for the former.

Guided by the desire to awaken or strengthen in the penitent a feeling of his guilt before God, put questions to him about which he probably does not think, but which reveal the wounds of his soul to him. To this end it is more profitable not to continue your questions in the accepted order of sins against God, against one’s neighbour and then against oneself, but rather to ask them in the order which is most likely to awaken

his conscience. You see, our contemporary flock has almost forgotten about its direct relationship to God. What sense is there in asking a person about going to church regularly or attention to prayer if he forgot the way to God's church years ago, and never so much as makes the sign of the cross in the morning or in the evening? "I am not used to praying," such people boldly answer, "but I live honorably and do no harm to anyone; but there are many who pray to God and devour people." If a spiritual father has managed to dislodge a sinner from such a self-satisfied position by using the basic questions we have indicated above, then let him thank God. However, it is still useful to continue asking questions in the same order, according to the degree in which the conscience of contemporary people is sensitive to them — i.e., first ask about sins against one's neighbour, then about sins against the Person of God and finally about sins which derange the inner life of the sinner himself.

And so, if a Christian thinks that he has never offended his neighbour, tell him: "That is good, but we must understand 'offense' not only in the sense of what makes a person angry, but even more in the sense of what causes him harm. Thieves are strictly punished by the law and despised by people, but man has pleasures that are far more significant than money or things — his soul and his purity. Have you advised people to do anything evil or depraved? Have you made fun of anyone's chastity or modesty, or of their obedience to their elders, their honesty at work or in their studies? When young people lose their innocence, modesty and obedience to their parents and even their honesty, it is always under the influence of bad examples and evil advice, but those who have turned them away from the good path entirely forget about them and about the evil they have done to them. They have sinned terribly before God, far worse than thieves and robbers. But far more criminal are those who, not content with giving treacherous advice when they are asked, also make efforts on their own initiative, sometimes over a considerable period of time, to lure an innocent person into a sin from which he will probably not be able to free himself for a long time, or even for his whole life. How many such tempters there are in any school, who will not be content until they have dragged their comrade into a public house or acquainted him with corrupt people. Nevertheless, who does not know Christ's words: *'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea'* (Mt. 18:6)? So, haven't you committed this sin? Have you purposely sowed the seeds of doubt in your neighbor's heart? Have you made fun of his piety? Have you driven him away from prayer and church? Have you sowed the seeds of discord between brothers, between husband and wife, between co-workers or comrades? All those who do things like this will understand how far from the truth is the prejudice that has long been commonplace in society — that prayer and religion in general are the helpers and servants of the devil. The devil acquires great power over them, since they have surrendered themselves to his will. The same fate awaits those who sin by slandering their neighbour, either in conversation or in print; it also awaits those who condemn their neighbours without being sure that they are guilty of anything.

"Perhaps you have no opportunity to tempt or grieve your neighbor or lead him into disaster, and do not even wish to do so, but nevertheless, if you find out that some misfortune has befallen him, you glory over it rather than feel compassion for him. If this is so, see how black your soul is, and what a dangerous path you are on, for the Scriptures

say that ‘*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer*’ (1 John 3:15). But you are not guilty of this — glory to God. However, are you not given up to *remembrance of wrongs*, even if it is not expressed as a desire for revenge? According to the words of our Lord, this makes your prayers quite worthless, and shows that your heart is filled with great self-love and self-justification. You are guilty of the same thing if you have the spirit of disobedience in the family, at school or at work; if you fulfill your obligations only when you can be made to answer for them and find satisfaction in doing something your own way. It was through this disobedience that sin came into the world, and it is precisely from this that criminals begin their sinful exploits — guided always by the spirit of self-justification. This demonic spirit leads them through the following steps: disobedience, laziness, deception, outrages against their parents, seeking sensual enjoyment, theft, rejecting the fear of God, leaving their father’s house, robbery and murder and denial of the faith itself. When the person confessing hangs down his head, and you hear the voice of penitence in his speech and also that he is frightened by his sins, then tell him that these evil feelings of disobedience and especially of remembering wrongs and gloating over others’ misfortunes, grow up in a soul which likes to condemn everyone. This is sinful because a feeling of pleasure at other’s shortcomings always develops together with the habit of judging people without need. After this comes the desire not to recognize anything good in them, and this is already near to gloating over their misfortunes and even nearer to remembering wrongs. In secular or worldly society all this is considered praiseworthy — people openly make fun of obedience, or even become indignant at the very mention of it, expecting, on the contrary, that every subordinate, every soldier, workman, official and especially every professor should demand freedom upon freedom. This is expected especially of students and even of school boys. This spirit has even moved into the country and the parish, and even into the family, where only a strong paternal hand and the threat of being thrown out or of hunger can uphold that small amount of order that is left, which still protects the home from destruction. The last two years^{xxxix} have shown where this foul teaching of self-will has led. Not to mention the fact that people have become villains almost to a man, they are also dying of starvation, going about in ragged clothes, are deprived of the possibility of studying and communicating with each other by letter — in a word, they have returned to the state of savages. How, through what struggle did our Saviour lead people out of their former life and make them righteous and intelligent? Through obedience! ‘*Through the obedience of one, many were justified.*’^{xl} And even up to our days the highest form of piety, monasticism, consists primarily of obedience.

“And so, young Christian,” the priest will say, “if you wish to be a good, intelligent person and not just a stupid sheep, another member of the flock, then do not agree with the crowd of your contemporaries who are perishing spiritually and physically, do not go by the path of self-will, but by the path of obedience. Only then will you be a person; then, perhaps, of your many comrades you alone will not be a syphilitic at the end of your studies, will preserve your faith and your heart uncoarsened; truthful in word and honorable in soul, you will not be battered and storm-beaten like a weather vane, as are the majority of our contemporaries. But now you must know that, as you have admitted, you have already sinned much against God, and I am glad to see that you are filled with grief at the picture of your not insignificant sins, which have now been revealed to you and about which you probably did not even think previously.”

20. Sins Against God.

This is what the priest should say to a contemporary youth, but these last words can be used even when an older person is confessing, as a link between sins against one's neighbour and sins against God Himself, which he was previously unwilling even to notice. He can continue like this: "You are amazed at how you could treat your words and acts so lightly and not notice how reprehensible they were or what grief and spiritual harm they brought to your neighbours. But do you know why you were so thoughtless? Because you had all but forgotten God, and with Him your soul also, and had paid no attention to it. Nobody will pay attention to his soul or even be able to do so if he does not lay it open before God, pray to Him and hold Him in reverence. Thus you will understand how wrong you were when you said at the beginning of confession that, although you do not like praying to God, you live honourably and offend no one. You will understand how far from the truth is the prejudice that has long been commonplace in society — that prayer and religion in general do not concern a man's life among people, but only the secret recesses of his own soul, and so they are not so necessary as all that for humanity, or else not necessary at all. Now you will understand that if you prayed every day using the Church's prayers, enumerating your sins, and if you went to church and saw how Christians make prostrations to the ground while asking for a spirit of 'chastity, humility, patience, love and non-condemnation'^{xli} — then you would not remain in your state of spiritual indifference and would not burden your conscience with the load of sins and sinful habits which is now crushing your soul. But besides neglecting your soul in this way, haven't you also consciously permitted yourself to abuse both God and faith in Him? Haven't you sinned by blaspheming and murmuring against Him? You should realize that it is for this sin that the possessed and many of the insane have been given over to their afflictions.

"Have you sinned by *blasphemy*? Have you made fun of the various beliefs of the Church and her sacred customs, which you probably don't understand at all? But you let yourself do this, knowing that in the society you were in nobody would be able to expose your ignorance of these matters and nobody would speak out in defense of his faith, just as you probably didn't speak out when you heard people make deliberately false and unscrupulous attacks on the faith — isn't this true? But perhaps in your better moments you made a promise to God to correct your ways, and perhaps you also made vows to Him that you would undertake some religious struggle or do some good work? Have you fulfilled your vows? If not, do not be surprised when you are visited by feelings of acute despondency or anger, grief or fear, which apparently have no cause. The Lord sends all this to a sinful soul to make it stop and think whether it hasn't done something to deserve God's anger, remember about the unfulfilled vow and then offer repentance and correct this sin. The same consequences ensue if a Christian wittingly gives a false oath: are you not guilty of this? — Look, the Ecumenical Councils prescribe a long period of excommunication for this. If you haven't done this, then don't you sin by constantly and irreverently *swearing*, which is a proof of the complete absence of the fear of God and of contempt for God's being? Further, perhaps you don't know that all Christians are

obligated to attend at least the Liturgy every Sunday; according to the rules of the Holy Apostles anyone who was *absent from church* for three weeks running with no reasonable excuse, such as illness, was excommunicated from the Church and, if he repented, was received back as one who had fallen away. If you are guilty of this, don't try to calm yourself with the thought that most of the people you know do the same: there is plenty of room in Hell and God's Judgement will not, of course, be influenced either way by the number of sinners or of righteous ones . . . *Do you pray*, at least at home, *every day*? Besides the fact that this is our obligation, you must realize that a person who doesn't pray or take part in church services will never be able to strengthen himself in virtue or conquer his passions; furthermore, he will not be able to restrain himself from failing ever deeper and deeper into the abyss of the passions — either depravity or drunkenness, or demonic pride, or hard-healed cruelty, or love of possessions, or despondency.

“Do not believe those who say, ‘I revere God in my heart, and He does not need me to display myself before Him in church.’ They are lying. Would your father or mother believe you if you told them that you love them, but never spoke with them or visited them, while at the same time setting aside many hours for conversations with your comrades and lady-friends, for theaters and outings? You should realize that if you sincerely and firmly desire to be a human being, and not just a plaything of sinful passions, then you must fulfill your duties as a Christian, as a son of the Church: for even those who do so can only correct their lives by constant struggle against themselves and through the grace of God, which is given to those who pray. But if a person does not flee for refuge to the Church, then all he has left are beautiful words together with sinful passions and vices. Admit that your faith in the miracles of Christ and the saints is weak; you cannot possibly imagine how God hears our prayers. But if you are inclined to distrust the evidence of Christ and the Apostles, why do you trust the various fables of these adventurists — spiritualists, Khlysts and the like? Have you accepted that crazy belief in reincarnation, which has been adopted in Europe from the ancient pagan Buddhists in the form of Theosophy? Aren't you generally superstitious? You have probably known since childhood about the ignorance of the people — about the peasants immersed in superstition; but aren't the equally numerous superstitions of educated society even more ridiculous and unproven? Is it not being just as superstitious, blindly following the dictates of fashion and not stopping to think at all, when it accepts all the new inventions and fantastic theories of the artisans of the press, beginning with those with diplomas and ending with those who are utterly ignorant (such as those who try to interpret the Apocalypse)?^{xlii} Haven't you also surrendered yourself to their superstitious influence?

“And so lift up your gaze to Heaven, do not neglect thinking of your Redeemer, do not live estranged from Him, do not give your heart over to superstitions and ‘old wives’ tales’, as the Apostle calls them. Do not exchange Christ for Buddha with his teaching of reincarnation, which is so alluring for our laziness and passions.”

Note: The followers of the teaching that souls reincarnate into more and more perfect bodies come to a dead end when they are reminded of the appearance of Moses and Elias on Mount labor after the death of John the Baptist. They either have to renounce their beloved interpretation that John the Baptist is Elias born again, or else

admit that people can reincarnate into a former body. But they do not admit either of these possibilities.

21. Sins Against one's Own Soul.

The spiritual father continues his exhortations: “When you put yourself mentally before the face of God and offer repentance for your sins, then, apart from your offences against God and against other people, you will soon perceive how you have proved to be an unworthy proprietor of your own soul, which was given to you by God so that you could make it capable of fruitfully serving Him and your neighbours. A soul that has already submitted itself to God is always dissatisfied with itself, and reproaches itself not only for obvious infringements of God’s commandments, but also for having insufficient zeal in fulfilling them. Our penitential prayers, such as are offered by people leading a Church-centered life, lament first of all the sin of *laziness*. In the prayer, ‘O Lord and Master of my life...’, idleness (sloth) is mentioned first, and through nine penitential weeks we make ourselves contrite over this very sin, as we sing in church: ‘and have wasted my whole life in laziness.’^{xliii} Aren’t you also guilty of laziness, brother — of our Russian laziness? Do not make peace with it; even in worldly matters it is death for the soul and the parent of all vices, and in spiritual life even less should you submit to it. Do not try to go to the church where the service finishes earliest, do not cut your prayers short and besides this, always give yourself some disinterested work to do for the glory of God: either visiting the sick, or prisons, or sewing things for the poor or for the Church, or else earn money for a good cause or go and read to those in homes for the elderly. Then you will come to love labour in general, and a prolonged period of inactivity will always seem burdensome to you. Restrain yourself from *idle-talk* — from having conversations when it is time to work, from visiting houses where you do not obtain anything useful or joyful for your soul, but only want to go in order to kill time and keep away from work or profitable reading. From idle-talking one forms the habit of lying — of not trying to say what is true, but rather what is pleasant to the ear. Do not think that it is not particularly important if you are easily prepared to speak untruths: all the world’s foul deeds are unfailingly seasoned with lies and slanders. It is not for nothing that Satan is called the father of lies. Only lies and slander could poison the mind of the Jewish people when they cried out with one soul, ‘Crucify Him! Crucify Him!’ Without lies and slander the French Revolution of the 18th century would neither have begun nor been brought to completion, nor would the Pugachev rebellion in Russia, nor the contemporary (1920) destruction of our fatherland. And then, how greatly a person is valued if he is known to be truthful, unable ever to tell a lie. Keep a watch over your soul, so as always to speak the truth, and if you catch yourself telling a lie, then try to correct the error you have caused, and explain to those you were talking to that you spoke incorrectly at such a time about such a thing. If you do this then you will estrange yourself from lying. But if you give yourself up to it, then, quite apart from committing the sin of *slander* and the discords about which we spoke earlier, you will also not avoid another shameful habit, from which hardly anyone who calmly speaks untruths is free. By this I mean *flattery*, either of the powerful or of the crowd. Elections are now won by flattery and it is through

flattery that illicit love is obtained from women and through them that people are thrown onto the broad path — that leads to destruction. Haven't you also committed this very sin? This sinful flattery is particularly repulsive on the lips of contemporary man, who boasts of his independence and love of freedom while he is in fact using these very words to conceal his career of man-pleasing and flattery, changing his cast of mind and so-called "convictions" several times a day, depending on the different social groups he happens to be in. But if you are free from this sin, are you not guilty of one which is its direct opposite, although it is often combined with flattery? I mean by this the habit of *abuse*, which has now spread with horrifying force among the younger generation, especially the revolutionaries. Many of them do not pronounce the word "and" as often as vulgar words of abuse. This may be against the person they are talking to, in order to make it clear to their opponents how shameless they are and so prevent their opponents from trying to put them to shame; or else they simply sprinkle their speech with this shameless invective to make their own souls become coarsened more quickly and so not feel any pangs of conscience for their criminal condition. — Even if you do not abuse to so great a degree and have not the least desire to smother your conscience, even so you should restrain yourself from abusive words, because these will coarsen your soul and grieve the people you talk to, even if you do not intend to offend them. The Lord is especially angered by those who call their neighbour 'devil' or use the expressions 'The devil take you' (or 'him', or 'me'). No Christian who values his salvation will start saying such words, even without anger."

There is one more virtue which it is essential to acquire if you wish to move ahead in spiritual life. This is the virtue of *patience*, about which our contemporaries so dislike to hear, which is why they have destroyed both their souls and their country. However, it is difficult to speak of the beauty of virtues at confession, since its most immediate purpose is repentance of sins. So I will tell you about the sin of impatience. "Aren't you guilty of this sin? Probably a good half of the quarrels in your family have been caused by the fact that you have not tried to restrain for a short time the feeling of irritation at some carelessness or injustice, or at some offence you had been caused. Once there was a monk who could not put up with life in his monastery and had definitely decided to leave the community, but his elder advised him to write six words on a piece of paper: "I will endure for Jesus Christ." He told him to read them every time he was upset and felt the desire to leave the monastery. The monk thought that no good at all would come of this, but even so he decided to try it a few times. And what do you think happened? He was calmed every time when he read these words, and after he had done it a few times he stopped taking offense at the brethren altogether and understood that the very offenses were for the most part only imaginary, and his brothers had not even wanted to offend him. — If you prescribe yourself the *podvig* of patience, then you will also observe the Church fasts, since the Councils excommunicate a Christian for two years if he does not keep them. Observing the fasts is the best way, firstly, of acquiring the virtue of patience; secondly, of not wasting all your earnings on your personal needs and so being able to put something aside for charity and, finally, of keeping lustful passions in check and having a greater inclination towards prayer and spiritual reading."

When the priest has interrogated the sinner about everything that he found necessary or at least about everything that he found possible in the short time of confession, then besides giving specific advice about particular passions and sins, he

must give a short exhortation about preserving the soul from temptations. Here he must without fail warn him of the moral agony which is caused by his terrible and sinful habits.

“Anyone who commits a terrible sin and does not repent of it will become gloomy and hopeless like Cain. Even before he realizes what a terrible thing he has done he begins to feel a grief, which at first he does not understand, as Saul did. He becomes irritable and starts finding fault with his near ones and those around him. The affection of his children, wife and parents no longer makes him happy, but becomes burdensome for him. If he has been engaged in some elevating occupation, either intellectual or social work, it now seems quite foreign to his soul: he would like to get away from himself, but there is nowhere to go. It is doubly burdensome for him to be with those whom he has criminally deceived — his wife, for example, if he is deceiving her, or his employer, if he is robbing him. He seeks either solitude or the company of corrupt people who have nothing against such things as those which are weighing on his conscience. But in either case he is seeking oblivion, and he can find this, although not for long, in drunkenness, only to be crushed subsequently by his conscience redoubled in strength, and demanding oblivion again and again, at the bottom of which he finds despair and often suicide, the eternal destruction of the soul, after which even the Church’s prayers are powerless. Blessed will be that sinner who is horrified in time at his fall, admits it to the priest and asks forgiveness of those before whom he is guilty. But the deeper his fall has been, the more hardened his soul becomes, and the harder it will be for him to humble himself and repent. If you are now filled with feelings of repentance, then you should realize that every time you repeat or aggravate your sin the feelings of repentance will grow dim and flee from you like a morning shadow. It is not for nothing that even a sinner praying in church grievously cries out, “No tears, no repentance have I, nor compunction. But do Thou Thyself as God, O Savior, grant me these.”^{xliv} If only people thought, before resolving on committing a sin, what torment they would experience as a consequence of it even while still here on earth, in the ordinary conditions of life, they would turn away from temptations with as much resolve as they would from a tasty but fatal poison. “Sin shows me sweet things, but ever makes me taste and swallow bitter.”^{xlv}

And so, bringing his counsel to a conclusion, the spiritual father says: “Seek spiritual joys, the joys of pure love and well doing. Force yourself to do at least something in fulfillment of this commandment; prescribe at least some constant labour for the glory of God and the salvation of your soul; then sin will continuously lose its attraction for you and finally (or perhaps immediately) will become repulsive, as the Apostle Paul writes, ‘Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh’ (Gal. 5:16).”

Bringing to an end our exposition of advice to guide people in their struggle against the passions and in the healing of individual sins, we do not, I repeat, make any claim either to completeness or to a strictly systematic arrangement; for this subject is endless, just as the variety of human characters, situations and dispositions is endless. We will be satisfied if even a few spiritual fathers will read this and say, “Yes, now I have found out what is the essence of my task as a spiritual father, and I think I will be able, with God’s help, to say what is necessary even when my parishioners come to me with attitudes, deeds and admissions about which nothing has been said here.”

However, there is something else which we consider essential to add. We have been speaking of the spiritual curing of sinners, but we should say at least two or three words about the spiritual guidance of the righteous. By these we do not mean those Christians who have already subdued their passions and could teach the spiritual father himself how to be saved; but we mean rather those who are less confirmed in virtue, but still occupy themselves with their salvation and struggle preeminently in prayer and fasting. They must be protected from being carried away by mysticism of the Khlyst variety, and warned that the Holy Fathers strictly forbid people to squeeze feelings of prayerful exaltation or compunction out of themselves or to stimulate them artificially in any way. A person who does this is mistaking a purely physical sensation for spiritual exaltation; his heart palpitates, his breath comes in gasps, he has spasms and so on, and then, satisfied by such sensations, he begins to think that he is a great man of prayer, a spiritual person, and falls into proud self-delusion. While they forbid people to force their *feelings*, the fathers command us to force our *attention* into all the words and thoughts of a prayer — it is better to read fewer prayers, and pay more attention. Feelings do not depend on our will, but are sent by God as a gift of grace, which we can and should value very highly, but we must in no way deem ourselves superior to others or boast if we receive it. If it is long withheld from a person who prays or is taken away at times, then he should carefully think whether he is being hindered by some unrecognized sin, a secretly conceived passion or sinful worry over some worldly matter, and, if so, start struggling against it. But if his memory and conscience testify that this is not so, then he should patiently continue laboring at prayer, and the Lord will send compunction when it will be most useful for his soul — when he stops being impatient and presumptuous. Also the priest should persistently warn the faithful not to ask for visions and miracles, since Christians who begin asking for these are well on the way to *spiritual delusion (prelest)* and superstitions. Also, they should not be in a hurry to see the machinations of demons at work every time they experience some failure: we are too insignificant, in the spiritual sense, for evil spirits to take much trouble over us, since even without this we do what pleases them. We should consider attacks demonic only when we are set upon by an onslaught of malicious hatred, or of despondency and despair, if they have no other cause, or of unexpected and unself-induced attacks of lust. While restraining his spiritual children from desiring miracles and visions and demanding them from God, the priest should remind them that they should mentally place themselves before God during prayer. Furthermore, and this is especially important, he should remind them that not only do we look up mentally to God during prayer, but also the Lord, as ever, is looking down upon us, looking into our hearts, reading our thoughts and attending to our petitions and our words of praise. This thought always drives inattention and distraction away from a person who is praying; for if a person talking to a king pays close attention to every word the king says and penetrates into its meaning, concentrates and is respectful, then it follows that someone talking to the Lord, feeling the gaze of the All-Seeing One directed upon him, will be filled with reverent trembling and holy compunction.

22. Pences.

We promised to conclude with a few words about penances. According to the Nomocanon,^{xlvi} three-quarters of our contemporaries coming to confession are liable not just to strict penances, but to complete deprivation of communion for ten or twenty years, or even till the hour of death. But in this same Canon Law it is explained under what conditions this excommunication can be shortened as much as two or three times. However, it does not mention the most important condition, which did not exist when the Nomocanon was compiled. By this we mean the general sinfulness of the last two centuries and the consequence of this — that it is incomparably more difficult to struggle with sin than it was in the times of the ancient piety. This piety was universal and all the moral principles and customs of family and social life were subject to it; an example of this was the custom of adolescents marrying at the very onset of sexual maturity, or even earlier than this, at the age of fifteen: exceptions were made only for those youths and maidens who had given a vow of virginity. And so, under contemporary conditions of life, which are so far removed from God's commandments, the strictness of penances has to be reduced many times. But it is regrettable that spiritual fathers no longer give penances at all, either because of their own neglect of confession or else out of false delicacy and timidity. This non-application of penances causes scandal and no little distress to former Uniates, descendants of Polish Uniates, and also of the firmly Orthodox parishioners of those Great Russian dioceses which have retained to some extent the Old Believer way of life or, to be more precise, a strictly Church-centered way of life).^{xlvii} But it is not just a question of causing distress; we must fulfill the laws of our religion, even if we soften them in accordance with the lowered spiritual strength of our contemporaries.

And so, first of all, people must not be admitted to communion if they do not declare their resolve to abandon mortal sin — people carrying on an illicit liaison, for example, or the keepers of brothels or illicit gambling dens. Parishioners who have sinned by fornication, embezzlement, insulting their parents or blasphemy, but have offered repentance, can be admitted to communion; but they should be given some rule of prayer (*canona*) and must without fail make amends for the wrong they have done and make peace with those whom they have offended. But if they have only recently been converted from unbelief or heresy, or are now in the process of converting, then they should be admitted to communion without penance, but it must be explained to them what penalty they would have to undergo according to the canons. However, murderers, robbers, rapists, abortionists as well as doctors or other people who help them, sodomists, committers of bestiality, adulterers, seducers and conscious defilers of sacred objects must unfailingly be deprived of communion for several years, and certainly no less than one year if their repentance is fervent and sincere. Some of them can be admitted to communion immediately only if they committed such sins long ago, and have lamented over them ever since but could not resolve to come to confession. Concerning the imposition of prayers and prostrations, we have to reckon with the weakness and laziness of contemporary Christians: it is better to carry out a small rule than to be given a long one and not carry it out. With this we will bring our brotherly advice to spiritual fathers to an end.

Appendix A.

Extracts From the Order of Confession.

1. *Exhortation to the penitent:*

Behold my child, Christ standeth here invisibly, and receiveth thy confession: wherefore, be not ashamed, neither be afraid and conceal thou nothing from me: but tell me, doubting not, all things which thou hast done; and so shalt thou have pardon from our Lord Jesus Christ. Lo, His holy image is before us: and I am but a witness, bearing testimony before Him of all things which thou dost say to me. But if thou shalt conceal anything from me, thou shalt have the greater sin. Take heed, therefore, lest, having come to the physician, thou depart unhealed.

2. *First Prayer of Absolution:*

O Lord God of the salvation of Thy servants, gracious, bountiful and long-suffering, who repentest of our evil deeds, and desirest not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live: Show Thy mercy now upon Thy servant *N.*, and grant unto him (her) an image of repentance, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance, pardoning his (her) every transgression, whether voluntary or involuntary. Reconcile and unite him (her) unto Thy holy Church through Jesus Christ our Lord, with Whom also are due unto Thee dominion and majesty, both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

3. *Second Prayer of Absolution:*

May our Lord and God Jesus Christ, through the grace and bounties of His love towards mankind, forgive thee, my child, *N.*, all thy transgressions. And I, His unworthy priest, through the power given unto me by Him, do forgive and absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Appendix B.

Also From the Order of Confession.

(Note: In this context the words “penance” and “canon” refer to a period of exclusion from the Holy Mysteries.)

Then (after saying the prayer of absolution), the priest gives him a penance appropriate to his sin. And he says to him:

“Child, the Divine and Sacred Law commands that for so many years you do not commune the Holy Mysteries but only take Holy Water blessed at Theophany, and if you abstain from Holy Communion your sins will be absolved. But if you approach and commune, you will be a second Judas. If you are on the point of death, you may commune, but if you then recover you must continue with the penance and add on another canon as a consequence of having communed.”

Pay attention also to this:

According to the 39th rule of St. Basil the Great, a person receives a canon from the time he abandons the sin: if a person continues committing the sin but does not commune, this is not accounted to him as fulfillment of the penance. If he abstains from Communion for a time and then falls again into sin, he begins his penance over again.

If he falls into another sin before the penance has been fulfilled, then you must see which is longer, the unexpired period of the penance for the first sin or the penance for the second sin: whichever is longer is the length of the penance that has to be fulfilled. If, after abandoning the sin, he has abstained from Communion for a time, either of his own accord or at the command of another spiritual father, then this time counts as part of the penance.

Pay attention to this:

When there should be found a person who is reverent, and desires to perform a certain number of prostrations daily, according to his strength, remit one year from his period of exclusion from Communion, if he wishes to give alms according to his ability, remit another year. If he fasts on Wednesdays and Fridays, according to the divine rules, remit another year. But if he wishes to abstain from meat on Mondays also, remit another year: if from cheese and eggs, another. Similarly, if he performs some other virtuous deed remit another year. If he is less than thirty years old, reduce it by another. If he is less than twenty years old, he is excluded from Communion for a shorter time. But if he does not wish to do these things, let him fulfill all the years that are appointed.

Pay attention also to this:

If a person who has sinned wants to become monk, let him fulfill two-thirds of the penance and be let off one third. if he wants to go into a cenobitic monastery, let him off one half. If he fails after taking the habit, let him fulfill all that had previously been remitted from his penance.

How Spiritual Fathers Should Dispose Those Confessing to Them.

The twelfth rule of the First Council of Nicaea, as well as the second, fifth and sixth rules of the Council of Ancyra, give bishops the power to increase or decrease the period of exclusion depending on whether repentance is fervent or apathetic. Let their former life be taken into account, and whether they are now living in chastity or in laxity and laziness: and so let love for man be exercised by measure. If they keep unwaveringly to their accustomed ways and want to continue serving the pleasures of the flesh rather than the Lord, and are not willing to live according to the Gospel, we have nothing to say to them.

Appendix C.

Brief Confession Before a Spiritual Father.

I confess to the Lord my God before thee, reverend father, all my sins which I have committed up to the present day and hour, in deed, word and thought. Every day and

every hour I sin through ingratitude to God for His great and numberless blessings to me and His most gracious providence and care for me, a sinner. I have sinned through:

idle talk
condemnation of others
scorn
insubordination
pride
envy
anger
slander
inattention
listlessness
negligence
carelessness
resentment and remembering wrongs
disobedience
grumbling
self-will
reproaching others
evil speech
lying
saying unseemly things
laughter
self-love
love of glory
love of honor
gluttony
love of sensual pleasure
over-eating
drunkenness
attachment to things
love of money
vainglory
laziness
acceptance of lustful and impure thoughts
missing church services
dozing and sleeping in church
neglect of prayer
concealing sins at confession

I have sinned with all my senses, both spiritual and physical, wherefore I repent to the Lord and ask forgiveness. Absolve all my sins, reverend father, and bless me to partake of the Mysteries of Christ.¹⁰

¹⁰ Compiled by the late Archbishop Tikhon of San Francisco. Based on a longer version by St. Dimitry of Rostov.

Appendix D.

Questions for Penitents, According to the Ten Commandments.

Do you constantly have the thought of God in mind and the fear of God in your heart?
Is your faith in God shaken by scepticism or doubt?
Do you question the holy tenets of the Orthodox Faith?
Do you ask God to strengthen your faith?
Do you despair of God's mercy?
Do you pray to God every day, morning and night? Is your prayer zealous?
Do you always attend divine services whenever possible? Do you miss them without good reason?
Do you prefer religious books and in fact do you read them?
Have you read atheistic and heretical books out of sinful curiosity?
When the Church requests it, do you willingly make donations to charitable causes and to the Church?
Have you consulted fortune-tellers? Have you taken part in seances?
Have you forgotten about the most important thing in life, i.e. preparation for eternity and your answer to God if you have given yourself up to vanity, sloth, pleasure and carelessness?

Second Commandment

Does God take first place with you? Perhaps God does not take first place, but something else, for example, the accumulation of money, the acquisition of property, amusement and entertainment, food and drink, clothes, self-adornment, the urge to devote attention to yourself, to play the leading part, to receive praise, to spend your time in distractions, in reading frivolous books, etc?

Are you distracted from God by a passion for television, movies, the theater, card-games?

Perhaps because of worrying about yourself or your family you forget about God and fail to please Him and do not carry out what is required of you by the Church?

If so, that means you are serving an idol and that it, not God, has first place with you. Perhaps art, sport or study take first place with you? Perhaps some passion (love of money, gluttony, carnal love) has taken possession of your heart? Have you made an idol of yourself out of pride or egotism? Examine yourself.

Third Commandment

Do you use foul language in ordinary everyday conversation? Have you been thoughtless and irreverent with the name of God or, what is worse, have you treated something holy as a joke? Or, God forbid, in a fit of bitterness or anger or despair have you given way to impudent grumbling at God or even reviling Him?

Have you sworn an oath and then broken it?

Have you given in to despondency?

Do you pray absent-mindedly or inattentively?

Fourth Commandment

Do you violate the sanctity of Sundays and great feast-days which have been fixed by the Church by working for gain or profit?

Instead of attending divine services on feast-days, do you spend time entertaining yourself, e.g. at a ball or the theater, movies or some gathering where there is no mention of God?

Have you yourself arranged such entertainments and gatherings and thus distracted people from attendance at church?

Do you conscientiously attend divine services? Do you come to church late, at the middle or end of the service? Do you leave it early? Do you attend church on Sundays and feast-days?

Do you help the poor and those in need?

Do you violate the fasts?

Have you been drunk or used drugs?

Fifth Commandment

Have there been times when you were disrespectful towards your parents, or inattentive to their advice and concern? Have you taken care of them in their illnesses and old age?

If your parents have died, do you often pray in church or at home for the repose of their souls?

Have you been disrespectful towards the pastors of the Church? Have you criticized them? Have you become embittered against them when they reminded you of eternity, of preparation for it, of the salvation of your soul, of sins; or when they call on you to be obedient to the Church and her rules?

Have you insulted someone older than you?

Sixth Commandment

You have not physically killed anyone in the literal sense, but perhaps you were the cause of someone's death indirectly: you could have helped someone poor or sick but did not; you did not feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, take in a stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and those in jail (Matt. 25: 34-46)?

Have you committed spiritual murder, i.e. have you led someone astray from the proper path; have you been enticed by heresy or schism; have you tempted someone to sin?

Have you killed someone spiritually by a display of malice and hatred?

Do you forgive those who offend you?

Do you bear malice and resentment in your heart for long?

Do you blame yourself in everything or only in some things?

Have you had recourse to unlawful operations (abortions), which is also killing, a sin of both husband and wife?

Seventh Commandment

Have you lived with someone of the opposite sex in a carnal relationship without having had a church marriage?

Do you conduct yourself freely and loosely with members of the opposite sex?

Have you defiled yourself by giving in to impure and lewd thoughts and desires? Or by reading pornographic books or looking at pornographic pictures? This includes sinful songs, suggestive dances, dirty jokes, movies, public performances, immodest dress, etc. Have you committed impure acts by yourself or with others? Have you had carnal relations with another person? Have you engaged in unnatural practices (bestiality, transvestism, sodomy)?

Eighth Commandment

Have you taken someone else's property in a direct or indirect way? — by fraud, diverse cunning, conspiracy? Perhaps you have not done what you were obliged to do in return for the recompense you received? Have you excessively yearned for material goods without wishing to share them with others who need them? Has miserliness taken possession of your soul? Have you accepted stolen goods? Have you disposed of others' goods when they were entrusted to you?

Ninth Commandment

Have you slandered your neighbor? Have you criticized others, spoken scandal or abused them for what you imagine are their sins and vices? Do you like to hear bad rumours about someone and then readily spread them, being allured by gossip and idle chatter? Do you tell lies? Do you always try to be truthful?

Tenth Commandment

Do you envy others? Envy always leads to malice and hatred and is capable of leading you to commit reckless acts, even killing.

ⁱ Fr. Amvrossy of Optina: A famous Russian elder, or “staretz” of the 19th century. See the book on him by John Dunlop, *Staretz Amvrossy: Model for Dostoyevsky's Staretz Zossima*, Nordland, 1972.

ⁱⁱ Stundists: forerunners of the Russian Baptists.

ⁱⁱⁱ Titular Councilor: a rank in the civil service. Metropolitan Anthony is referring to the attitude prevalent in pre-revolutionary Russia which regarded theological schools merely as schools for priests' sons without sufficient regard for their sacred function to prepare the pastors of the future. Metropolitan Anthony had fought against this and sought to make both students and teachers more aware of their spiritual calling.

^{iv} Available in Russian (“АѠН.: 8 ФБ∨Φ,>4 ”??), but unfortunately not in English. To some extent it may be replaced by the present work.

^v The *Synaxarion* is not available in English, but many other books of similar content are; for example, *The Desert Fathers*, translated by Helen Waddell, and the *Lausiac History* of Palladius.

^{vi} Selections from the *Philokalia* are available in English under the titles *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart* and *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, both translated by E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer. Of these, the first deals with the

higher stages of spiritual life and the second corresponds approximately to the first two volumes of the Russian edition which are especially recommended by Metropolitan Anthony.

^{vii} The present English edition of the *Ladder* (translated by Fr. Lazarus Moore) omits the “Epistle to Pastors.” A new translation including the “Epistle” is being prepared by the fathers of Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Brookline, Mass.

^{viii} L. Tolstoy: The novelist who towards the end of his life was so carried away by religious philosophy that he invented his own kind of Christianity. He blasphemously attacked the Orthodox Church in his later writings such as *Resurrection*, for which he was excommunicated by the Holy Synod of the Russian Church in 1901. (*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*)

^{ix} E. Renan: A renegade French theologian famous for his *Life of Jesus* (1863), in which he repudiated the supernatural and moral aspects of Christ’s life and portrayed him as just a charming and amiable Galilean preacher. (*ibid.*)

^x H. Spencer: A famous English philosopher of the nineteenth century, the leading exponent of agnosticism, the doctrine that only material phenomena can be the subject of real knowledge and that all knowledge of such entities as a Divine Being is impossible. (*ibid.*)

^{xi} The title of this chapter (“Dukhovnaya Mnitelnost”) could perhaps be rendered “Spiritual Suspiciousness.”

^{xii} Available (in Russian) in *A Biography and the Works of Blessed Metr. Anthony*, Vol. 16, Part I, “The Agreement of the Gospel Narratives of Christ’s Resurrection,” pp. 26-35, by Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky).

^{xiii} Stephan Yavorsky: The first (and only) president of the Holy Synod of the Russian Church after the Synod was instituted by Peter I in 1721. A famous theologian, he wrote against the Protestant influence then prevalent in Russian theology, but was himself somewhat influenced by Roman Catholic theology. *The Rock of Faith* is his most famous polemical work in this controversy.

^{xiv} See 1 Tim. 1:19.

^{xv} Lord Byron (1788-1824) was an English poet, who created the “Byronic Hero,” who reappears throughout his works — a sad, melancholy young man, brooding in a melodramatic way upon something mysterious and evil in his background which he never explains (*The Readers’ Encyclopaedia*, by William Rose Benet).

^{xvi} Mephistophiles: the sneering, jeering, leering tempter of Faust, in the legend in which Faust sells his soul to the devil in exchange for twenty-four extra years of life, during which all his desires are to be satisfied. Modern versions of this legend were written in the nineteenth century by Goethe and others (*ibid.*)

^{xvii} See Daniel, ch. 4.

^{xviii} In earlier periods people often came to confession for other reasons — see above, Ch. 6.

^{xix} Adultery: a sexual act which violates the bond of marriage. Fornication: any illicit sexual act.

^{xx} Just as grace can be perceived by some upon the physical countenance of a person, so too can the effects of sin.

^{xxi} In the English language edition of the *Rudder* see, for instance, the distinction made between the sins mentioned in Canons 9 and 18 of St. John the Faster (pp. 938 and 942).

^{xxii} Mustard plaster: a traditional cure for chest complaints.

^{xxiii} Pushkin puts these remarkable words into the mouth of Tsar Boris (Godunov) in his dying farewell to his son Fyodor:

“Preserve, preserve thy sacred purity,
Innocence and proud sense of shame:
For who gains the habit in his early years
Of wallowing in foul sensual pleasures
Is morose and bloodthirsty when he grows up

And his mind is prematurely darkened.” (Authors note)

^{xxiv} Matthew 7:12.

^{xxv} Luke 17:2.

^{xxvi} Forbidden degrees: i.e. between persons who are closely related to each other. For a precise definition of the prohibited degrees see *The Rudder*; p. 977 et seq.

^{xxvii} i.e. by comparison with the sectarians, Old Believers, etc., who are often more marked in their sobriety. Metropolitan Anthony is referring in particular to conditions in nineteenth century Russia, and does not mean to imply that drunkenness is inevitably concomitant to the Orthodox Faith.

^{xxviii} Valaam: a monastery in the far north of Russia near Finland.

^{xxix} Despondency: a translation of the Russian “uniniye.” See note 1 to Ch. 8 (p. 39). In the original this chapter is entitled “Other Passions and Individual Sins” — but most of it in fact concerns despondency.

^{xxx} Matt. 2:28.

^{xxxi} Luke 18:22.

^{xxxii} This refers to the Catechism of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow which is available in English.

^{xxxiii} The troparion of Holy Thursday.

^{xxxiv} The Prayer before the Ambo at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

^{xxxv} Of these, 2) and 3) are available in English in the Prayer Rook (Jordanville, 1960). A shortened version of 5), compiled by the late Archbishop Tikhon of San Francisco, is included as Appendix C of this book.

^{xxxvi} See Chapter 9.

^{xxxvii} Some converts from heresy, who already had received the empty form of Baptism, used to be received into the Russian Church by Chrismation alone. This was an example of “economia” — a departure from the strict requirements of the canons which the Church can make if it is beneficial under given circumstances. It was understood that the mystery of Chrismation also bestowed the grace of Baptism, giving content to the heretical baptism which had previously been an empty form. However, in 1971 the Council of Bishops of the Russian Church Outside Russia resolved that in the future such converts should be received through Holy Baptism, in order to make it clear in this time of Ecumenism that the Orthodox Church is the only true Church and that outside the Orthodox Church there is no grace or Baptism.

^{xxxviii} “Sinful”: the priest would ask questions about various sins and the penitent would answer “sinful” if he had committed them.

^{xxxix} The last two years: the first two years of the Russian Revolution.

^{xl} Romans 5:19.

^{xli} Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian

^{xlii} Presumably referring to some contemporary journalists who gave an interpretation of the Apocalypse.

^{xliii} After the Gospel at Sunday matins in Lent and the preparatory weeks.

^{xliv} The Great Canon, Ode 2, Troparion 25.

^{xlv} The Great Canon, Ode 1, Troparion 5.

^{xlvi} i.e. Canon Law. See Ch. 4, Note 3.

^{xlvii} In their rejection of contemporary society, Old Believer communities retained in an outward way the pious style of life that had been prevalent before Peter I's reforms. Of course this was of no actual value to them as they were schismatics regardless who had cut themselves off from the Church. Note that Metropolitan Anthony is not praising the Old Believers here, but those Orthodox parishes which retained the older way of life. Cf. Ch. 4, n. 12.