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A SHORT STORY OF ANTICHRIST

Author(s): VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV

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A SHORT STORY OF ANTICHRIST

There lived at that time a remarkable man—many called him a superman—who was as far from being a child in intellect as in heart. He was young, but his genius made him widely famous as a great thinker, writer and social worker by the time he was thirty-three. Conscious of his own great spiritual power, he had always been a convinced idealist, and his clear intelligence always made clear to him the truth of that which ought to be believed in: the good, God, the Messiah. He believed in God, but at the bottom of his heart unconsciously and instinctively preferred himself to Him.

Vladimir Solovyov is increasingly recognized as one of the leading religious thinkers of the 19th century, one whose influence has cut across denominational boundaries. His major writings in English include THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE GOOD; GOD, MAN AND THE CHURCH; THE MEANING OF LOVE; LECTURES ON GOD-MANHOOD, and RUSSIA AND THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH. A Short Story of Anti-Christ is probably already known to many of our readers, but the editors of CROSS CURRENTS thought that it was symbolically appropriate to reprint at this time, on the eve of the Vatican Council, what Father Florovsky called Solovyov's "magnificent . . . last description of Christian Reunion . . . in Apocalyptic terms" (CROSS CURRENTS, Winter 1962, p. 118).

The translation of the story, by Natalie Duddington, is taken from A SOLOVYOV ANTHOLOGY, edited by S. L. Frank (which includes a useful introduction by the editor), which is out of print in the United States, and we wish to thank the Student Christian Movement Press, Bloomsbury St., W.C. 1, London, England, for permission to reprint it.

The story represents "the concluding portion of Solovyov's last work, THREE CONVERSATIONS (1899–1900). It is concerned with the truly Christian attitude to evil, and in particular with justifying active opposition to evil by force, as against Tolstoy's doctrine of non-resistance. It is written in the form of dialogue, after the pattern of Plato's dialogues. The chief characters are 'the general,' representing the morality of the military class, 'the prince,' representing Tolstoy's theory, 'the politician,' representing the standpoint of Realpolitik, and Mr. Z., who expounds Solovyov's own ideas. At the end of the third conversation Mr. Z. reads the MS of a Russian monk Pansophius (the name suggests Sophia and the doctrine of 'pan-unity'). Mr. Z. (Solovyov) adds: 'In my opinion this work gives in the form of fiction or of an imaginary historical narrative all that seems most likely to be true about this subject according to the Scriptures and church tradition.' The story begins with the description of the Mongolian invasion of Europe and the fifty years of Mongolian domination; finally the Mongols are expelled, and democratic order and liberal enlightenment triumph in Europe. The story is given here with a few abbreviations." (Appendix II, A SOLOVYOV ANTHOLOGY, pp. 254–5.)

... The inordinate pride of the great idealist seemed justified both by his exceptional genius, beauty and nobility, and his lofty asceticism, disinterestedness and active philanthropy. He was so abundantly blessed with gifts from above that he was scarcely to blame for regarding them as special signs of exceptional divine favor; he considered himself as next to God, as the son of God in a unique kind of way. In short he recognized himself for what Christ really was. But this consciousness of his own higher dignity expressed itself not as a sense of moral obligation to God and the world, but as a conviction that he had rights and privileges over others, especially over Christ. At the beginning he had no hostility against Jesus. He admitted His messianic dignity and significance, but he sincerely saw in Him merely the greatest of his own predecessors; his mind, clouded by pride, could not understand Christ's moral achievement and His absolute uniqueness. He reasoned thus: "Christ came before me; I come second; but that which in the order of time comes later is essentially prior. I come last, at the end of history, just because I am perfect and final savior. The first Christ was my forerunner. His mission was to anticipate and prepare my coming." With this idea in his mind the great man of the twenty-first century applied to himself all that is said in the Gospel about the second coming, understanding by it, not the return of the same Christ, but the replacement of the preliminary Christ by the final, that is, by himself.

... This man also justified his proud preference of himself to Christ by the following argument: "Christ, in preaching the moral good and manifesting it in his life, was the *reformer* of mankind, but I am destined to be the *benefactor* of this partly reformed, and partly incorrigible mankind. I shall give all men what they need. Christ as a moralist divided men into the good and the bad, but I will unite them by blessings which are needed by the good and the bad alike. I shall be the true representative of the God who makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust. Christ brought a sword, I shall bring peace. He threatened the earth with the dreadful last judgment. But I shall be the last judge, and my judgment will be one of mercy as well as of justice. There will be justice too in my judgment, not retributive, but distributive justice. I will make distinctions between people and give everyone his due."

In this beautiful frame of mind he waited for some clear call from God, for some manifest and striking testimony to his being the eldest son, God's beloved first-born. He waited, and meanwhile nurtured his selfhood on the contemplation of his superhuman gifts and virtues—as already said, he was a man of irreproachable morality and extraordinary genius.

The righteous and proud man waited and waited for a sanction from above to begin his work of saving humanity—and still the sanction did

not come. He was thirty-three years old already; another three years passed. And suddenly there flashed through his mind a thought that sent a hot tremor into the very marrow of his bones: "And what if . . . ? What if not I, but that other . . . the Galilean. . . . What if He is not my forerunner, but the real one, the first and the last? But then He must be *living*. . . . Where is He? . . . What if He comes to me . . . here, now. . . . What shall I say to Him? Why, I shall have to bow before Him like the most stupid of Christians, shall have to mutter senselessly like a Russian peasant, 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner,' or grovel like a Polish countrywoman! I, the bright genius, the superman! No, never!" And instead of the former cold rational respect for God and Christ there was born and grew in his heart, first, a kind of terror, and then a burning, choking and corroding *envy* and furious, breath-taking hatred, "I, I, and not He! He is not living, He is not and shall not be. He is not risen, He is not risen from the dead! He rotted in the tomb, rotted like the lowest. . . ."

Foaming at the mouth, he rushed out of the house and garden and, leaping and bounding, ran in the black depth of the night along the rocky path. . . . The fury died down, and despair, hard and heavy as the rocks and dark as the night, took its place. He stopped at the sheer drop of the cliff and heard the vague noise of the stream rushing along the stones far below. Unendurable anguish weighed on his heart. Suddenly something stirred within him. "Shall I call Him—ask Him what I am to do?" And the sad and gentle image seemed to rise before him in the darkness. "He pities me. . . . No, never! He did not, He did not rise from the dead!"

And he threw himself down from the cliff. But something resilient like a water-spout supported him in the air, he felt a kind of electric shock, and some power flung him back. He lost consciousness for a moment and when he came to himself he was kneeling a few steps away from the edge of the cliff. He saw the outline of a figure glowing with a misty phosphorescent light and its eyes penetrated his soul with their intolerable sharp brilliance.

He saw those piercing eyes and heard—he did not know whether from within himself or from outside—a strange voice, toneless and, as it were, stifled, and yet clear, metallic and absolutely soulless as though coming from a phonograph. And the voice was saying to him: "You are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Why have you not sought me? Why did you revere that other, the bad one, and His Father? I am your god and your father. And that other one, the beggar, the crucified, is a stranger both to me and to you. I have no other son but you. You are my only one, only begotten, co-equal with me. I love you and ask nothing of you. You are beautiful, powerful and great. Do your work in your own name, not in mine. I have no envy, I love you. I want nothing from

you. He whom you regarded as God asked of His son boundless obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, and He did not help Him on the cross. I ask nothing of you, and I will help you. I will help you for your own sake, for the sake of your own dignity and excellence and of my pure disinterested love for you. Receive my spirit. Once upon a time my spirit gave birth to you in beauty, now it gives birth to you in power.”

At these words of the unknown being the superman's lips opened of themselves, two piercing eyes came quite close to his face, and he felt a sharp, frozen stream enter into him and fill his own being. And at the same time he was conscious of wonderful strength, energy, lightness and rapture. At that instant the luminous outline and the eyes suddenly disappeared, something lifted him into the air and at once deposited him in the garden by the house door.

Next day not only the great man's visitors but even his servants were struck by his peculiar, as it were, inspired expression. They would have been still more impressed could they have seen with what supernatural ease and speed he wrote, locking himself in his study, his famous work entitled *The Open Way to Universal Peace and Welfare*.

... That book, written after the adventure on the cliff, showed in him an unprecedented power for genius. It was all-embracing and all-reconciling. It combined noble reverence for ancient traditions and symbols with broad and bold radicalism in social and political demands and precepts, boundless freedom of thought with the deepest understanding of all things mystical, absolute individualism with ardent devotion to the common good, the most lofty idealism of guiding principles with thoroughly definite and concrete practical conclusions. And it was all put together with such consummate art that every one-sided thinker or reformer could easily see and accept the whole entirely from his own particular point of view, without sacrificing anything for *the truth itself*, or rising above his own self for the sake of it, or giving up his one-sidedness, or in any way correcting his mistaken views and aspirations, or trying to make up for their insufficiency.

... No one raised objections against this book, for it seemed to everyone a revelation of the all-embracing truth. It did such complete justice to the past, it passed such dispassionate judgment on every aspect of the present, it brought the better future so concretely and tangibly within reach, that everyone said, “This is the very thing we want; here is an ideal that is not utopian, a plan which is not a chimera.” The wonderful writer carried all with him and was *acceptable* to everyone, so that Christ's words were fulfilled:

“I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” For in order to be received, one must be acceptable.

True, some pious people, while warmly praising the book, wondered why Christ was not once mentioned in it; but other Christians replied: "And a good thing too! In the past, everything holy was so bedraggled by all kinds of self-appointed zealots, that nowadays a deeply religious writer has to be very careful. And since the whole book is permeated by the truly Christian spirit of active love and all-embracing benevolence, what more do you want?" And all agreed with this.

Soon after the publication of the *Open Way*, which made its author the most popular man in the world, there was held in Berlin the international constituent assembly of the European States Union.

... The "initiated" decided to concentrate executive power in the hands of one person, investing him with sufficient authority. . . . The *man of the future* was elected almost unanimously life-long president of the United States of Europe. When he appeared on the rostrum in all the brilliance of his superhuman young strength and beauty and, with inspired eloquence, expounded his universal program, the assembly, charmed and completely carried away, in a burst of enthusiasm decided without putting it to the vote to pay him the highest tribute by electing him Roman emperor. The assembly closed amidst general rejoicing, and the great elect published a manifesto beginning with the words, "Peoples of the earth! My peace I give unto you," and ending as follows: "Peoples of the earth! The promises have been fulfilled! Eternal universal peace is secured. Every attempt to disturb it shall be immediately met with overwhelming opposition. Henceforth there is in the world one central power which is stronger than all other powers, both separately and taken together. This invincible and all-conquering power belongs to me, the plenipotentiary chosen emperor of Europe and ruler of all its forces. International law is supported at last by sanctions that have hitherto been lacking to it. Henceforth no country will dare to say 'war' when I say 'peace.' Nations of the world, peace be unto you!" The manifesto had the desired effect.

... Within a year a world-wide monarchy in the exact and proper sense of the term was founded. The seedlings of war were pulled out by the roots. The League of Universal Peace met for the last time and, having addressed an enthusiastic eulogy to the great peace-maker, dissolved itself as no longer necessary. In the second year of his reign the Roman and universal emperor issued another manifesto: "Peoples of the earth! I promised you peace and I have given it to you. But peace is only made sweet by prosperity. It is no joy to those who are threatened with destitution. Come unto me, all you that are cold and hungry and I will give you food and warmth." Then he announced a simple and all-inclusive social reform that was already indicated in his book and had captivated at the time all noble and clear minds. Now that the world's finances and enormous landed properties were concentrated in his hands, he could

carry out this reform and satisfy the desires of the poor without appreciable injustice to the rich. Everyone was paid according to his capacity, and every capacity was rewarded according to its merits and results.

. . . There was firmly established in all mankind the most important form of equality—the *equality of general satiety*. That was done in the second year of his reign. The social and economic problem was solved once for all. But though food is of first importance to the hungry, those who have sufficient food want something else.

Even animals when they have had enough to eat want not merely to sleep but to play as well. This is even more true of men who *post panem* have always demanded *circenses*.

The superman-emperor understood what the crowd needed. At that time a great magician surrounded with a halo of strange facts and wild fairy tales came to him in Rome from the distant East.

This magician, Apollonius by name, unquestionably a man of genius, semi-Asiatic and semi-European, was a Catholic bishop *in partibus infidelium*. He combined in a marvelous way a mastery of the latest discoveries and technical application of Western science with a knowledge both theoretical and practical of all that is real and significant in the traditional mysticism of the East. The results of this combination were astounding. Apollonius mastered, for instance, the half-scientific and half-magical art of attracting and directing at his will atmospheric electricity, so that people said he *commanded fire to come down from heaven*. But while striking the imagination of the multitude by all kinds of unheard-of novelties he refrained for a time from abusing his power for any special purposes. And so this man came to the great emperor, worshipped him as the true son of God, and, declaring that in the secret books of the East he had found direct prophecies about him as the last savior and judge of the earth, offered himself and his art in service to him. The emperor was charmed, accepted him as a gift from above, and bestowing splendid titles upon him, kept the magician permanently at his side. The peoples of the earth, having received from their master the blessings of universal peace and abundant food for all, were also given the chance of permanently enjoying the most diverse and unexpected signs and miracles. The third year of the superman's reign was coming to an end.

The political and social problems were happily solved; now there was the religious problem to deal with. The emperor himself raised it, and first of all with reference to Christianity. The position of Christianity at that time was as follows. It had considerably decreased in numbers—there were not more than forty-five million Christians on the whole of the globe—but it had pulled itself together morally and reached a higher level, so that it gained in quality what it had lost in quantity. Men who had no spiritual interests in common with Christianity were no longer

numbered among Christians. The different denominations had lost about the same proportion of their members, so that the numerical relation between them was approximately the same as before; as to their mutual feelings, though there was as yet no complete reconciliation, the hostility between them had lessened considerably, and the differences had lost their former sharpness. Papacy had long been exiled from Rome and after many wanderings found shelter in St. Petersburg on condition that it was to refrain from propaganda, both there and within the country. In Russia it assumed a much simpler form. Without decreasing the necessary personnel of its colleges and offices, it had to spiritualize the nature of their activities, and also to bring down to the minimum its splendid ritual and ceremonial observances. Many strange customs that might be a stumbling block fell out of usage, though they were not formally abolished. In all other countries, especially in North America, the Roman Catholic hierarchy still had many representatives with an independent position, strong will and indefatigable energy; they made the unity of the Roman Church more closely knit than ever and preserved its international, cosmopolitan significance. As to Protestantism, which was still headed by Germany, especially after the reunion of a considerable part of the Anglican Church with Catholicism, it had freed itself from its extreme negative tendencies whose champions openly passed over to religious indifference and unbelief. Only sincere believers remained in the Evangelical Church; the men who stood at the head of it combined wide erudition with deep religious faith, and strove more and more to become the living image of the true ancient Christianity. Russian Orthodoxy had lost many millions of its nominal members when political events changed the official position of the Church, but it had the joy of being united to the best elements among the Old Believers and even among many sectarians of the positively religious type. The regenerated Church, while not increasing in numbers, grew in spiritual power, which showed itself very clearly in the struggle against extremist sects with a demonic and satanic tinge that had multiplied both among the masses and in society.

During the first two years of the new reign the Christians' attitude towards the emperor and his peaceful reforms was one of definite sympathy and even enthusiasm. But in the third year, when the great magician appeared, many of the Orthodox, Catholics and Evangelicals began to feel uneasy and to disapprove. The passages in the Gospels and the Epistles about the prince of this world and antichrist were read more attentively than before and excited lively comments. From certain signs the emperor guessed that a storm was gathering, and decided to make haste and clear up matters. Early in the fourth year of his reign he addressed a manifesto to all his faithful Christians of whatsoever denomination, inviting them to elect or appoint plenipotentiary representatives to an

ecumenical council under his presidency. By this time he had transferred his residence from Rome to Jerusalem. Palestine was then an autonomous state, populated and ruled chiefly by Jews. Jerusalem had been a free city and was now made an imperial one. Christian holy places remained intact, but the whole of the broad terrace Haram-ash-Sharif, from Birket-Israin and the barracks on one side, and down to the El-Aksa mosque and "Solomon's stables" on the other, was occupied by a huge new building. It included, in addition to two small old mosques a large "Imperial" temple for the union of all cults, and two luxurious imperial palaces with libraries, museums and special accommodation for magical experiments and exercises. The ecumenical council was to open in this semi-temple and semi-palace on the fourteenth of September. Since the Evangelical denomination has no priesthood in the proper sense, the Orthodox and Catholic hierarchs in accordance with the emperor's wish decided, for the sake of uniformity among the delegates, to admit to the council some of their laymen known for their piety and devotion to the interests of the Church; and if laymen were admitted, the rank and file of the clergy and monks could not be excluded. Thus the general number of the council members exceeded three thousand, and about half a million Christian pilgrims flooded Jerusalem and Palestine.

There were three outstanding men among the council members. First, the Pope, Peter the Second, who, by right, headed the Catholic part of the council. His predecessor died on the way to the council, and a conclave convened at Damascus unanimously elected Cardinal Simone Barionini, who took the name of Peter. He was of humble origin, from the province of Naples, and became known as a Carmelite preacher; he had done much good work in combating a certain Satanic sect that had gained great influence in St. Petersburg and the neighborhood and was leading astray both the Orthodox and the Catholics. He was made bishop of Mogilyov and afterwards a cardinal, and was singled out beforehand for the papal tiara. He was a man of about fifty, of medium height and strong build, with a red face, an aquiline nose and bushy eyebrows. Warm-hearted and impetuous, he spoke with fervor and sweeping gestures, and carried away rather than convinced his audience. The new Pope expressed distrust and disapproval of the world-lord, especially after the late Pope, setting out for the council, had at the emperor's insistence made the imperial chancellor and the great magician, the exotic bishop Apollonius, a cardinal. Peter considered Apollonius a dubious Catholic and an indubitable impostor.

The real, though unofficial, leader of the Orthodox was the Elder John, very well known among the Russian people. His official status was that of a bishop "in retirement," yet he did not live in any monastery, but constantly travelled about. There were strange legends about him. Some people maintained that he was the risen Fyodor Kuzmich, that is,

the Emperor Alexander I,¹ who had been born some three centuries before. Others went further and said that he was the real Elder John, i.e., the apostle John the Divine who had never died and of late appeared openly. He himself said nothing about his origin or his youth. He was very old but still vigorous, with yellowish and even greenish-white curly hair and beard, tall and thin, with full and slightly rosy cheeks, lively bright eyes and a touchingly kind expression in his face and voice; he always wore a white cassock and cloak.

The leader of the Evangelical members of the council was a most learned German theologian, Professor Ernst Pauli. He was a lean old man of medium height, with a huge forehead, sharp nose and clean-shaven chin. His eyes had a peculiar ferociously good-natured look. He constantly rubbed his hands, shook his head, menacingly knitted his brows and thrust out his lips; as he did so, his eyes glittered and he made gloomy and disjointed sounds: *so! nun! ja! so also!* He was dressed for the occasion and wore a white tie and a long clerical frock coat with some decorations.

The opening ceremony was most impressive. Two-thirds of the huge temple dedicated to the "unity of all cults" were occupied with benches and other seats for members of the council, and one-third was taken up with a tall platform; there were two thrones on it, one for the emperor, and a lower one for the great magician (cardinal and imperial chancellor), and behind them long rows of armchairs for the ministers, courtiers, and secretaries of state, as well as longer rows at the sides for a purpose unknown. The members had already celebrated their religious services in the different churches, and the opening of the council was to be entirely secular. When the emperor came in with his suite and the great magician, and the orchestra played "the march of united humanity," which was used as the imperial international hymn, all those present rose to their feet and waving their hats called out loudly three times: "*Vivat! Hurrah! Hoch!*" The emperor, standing by his throne and with majestic benignity stretching out his hand, said in a pleasant and sonorous voice:

"Christians of all denominations! My beloved subjects and brothers! From the beginning of my reign which the Almighty has blessed with such wonderful and glorious deeds, I have not once had occasion to be displeased with you; you have always done your duty in all faith and conscience. But this is not enough for me. My sincere love for you, my beloved brothers, longs for reciprocity. I want you, not out of a sense of duty but from heartfelt love, to recognize me as your true leader in every work undertaken for the good of humanity. And so, in addition to what I do for all, I should like to bestow special favors upon you. Christians,

¹ There is a legend that Alexander I did not die in 1825 as recorded in history, but secretly left the palace disguised as a peasant and lived for many years a holy and ascetic life under the name of Fyodor Kuzmich.— *Ed.*

what can I do to make you happy? What can I give you, not as to my subjects but as to my brethren and co-believers? Christians, tell me what is most precious to you in Christianity, that I might direct my efforts to it?"

He paused and waited. There was a low murmur in the temple. The members of the council were whispering among themselves. Pope Peter, warmly gesticulating, was explaining something to those around him. Professor Pauli was shaking his head and fiercely smacking his lips. The Elder John, bending down to an Eastern bishop and a grey friar, was quietly admonishing them in a low voice. After waiting for a few minutes the emperor addressed the council in the same kind voice, though now there was a hardly perceptible note of irony in it: "Dear Christians," he said, "I understand how difficult it is for you to make one straightforward answer. I want to help you in this too. Unfortunately you have been broken up into various sects and parties since time immemorial and perhaps you have no longer a common aim. But if you cannot agree between yourselves I hope to bring agreement between all your parties by showing them all equal love and equal readiness to satisfy the *true* desire of each. Dear Christians! I know that for many and by no means the least of you the most precious thing in Christianity is the *spiritual authority* which it gives to its lawful representatives—not for their own advantage, of course, but for the common good, since such authority is the basis of true spiritual order and of moral discipline which is necessary to all. Dear brother-Catholics! oh, how well I understand your view and how I should like to find support for my power in the authority of your spiritual head! That you may not regard this as mere empty talk and flattery, I solemnly declare: in accordance with my autocratic will the chief bishop of all Catholics, the Pope of Rome, is henceforth restored to his Roman see with all the rights and privileges that had ever been given it by my predecessors, beginning with the Emperor Constantine the Great. And all I want of you, brother-Catholics, is an inner heartfelt recognition of me as your only defender and patron. Let those who regard me as such in their heart and conscience come to me here." And he pointed to the empty seats on the platform.

With joyful cries "*Gratias agimus! Domine, salvum fac magnum imperatorem*" almost all the princes of the Catholic Church, cardinals and bishops, the majority of believing laymen and more than half of the monks went up on to the platform and, after low bows to the emperor, took their seats there. But down below, in the middle of the hall, straight and immovable as a marble statue, the Pope Peter the Second sat in his place. All who had surrounded him were on the platform. But the thinned ranks of monks and laymen closed around him, forming a narrow ring, and a restrained whisper came from there: "*Non praevalerunt, non praevalerunt portae inferni.*"

Glancing with surprise at the motionless Pope, the emperor raised his voice once more: "Dear brothers! I know that there are among you some who value most in Christianity its *sacred tradition*, ancient symbols, ancient hymns and prayers, ikons and holy rites. And what indeed can be more precious to a religious mind? Know then, beloved, that today I have signed the statute and settled large sums of money on the world-museum of Christian archaeology in our glorious imperial city of Constantinople for the object of collecting, studying and preserving all relics of church antiquity, especially the Eastern. I ask you to elect tomorrow from among yourselves a committee to discuss with me the measures that must be taken in order to make the present manners, customs and ways of living as conformable as possible to the tradition and ordinances of the holy Orthodox Church. Brother-Orthodox! Let those of you who appreciate my action and who can wholeheartedly call me their true lord and leader, come up to me here!"

A great number of hierarchs from the East and North, a half of the former Old Believers and more than half of the Orthodox priests, monks and laymen with joyful cries went up on to the platform, looking askance at the Catholics proudly seated there. But the Elder John sighed aloud and did not move. When the crowd around him had considerably thinned, he left his bench and moved nearer to the Pope Peter and his circle. He was followed by other Orthodox who had not gone up on to the platform.

The emperor spoke again: "I know, dear Christians, that there are among you some who value most in Christianity personal conviction of truth and free inquiry into the Scriptures. There is no need for me to speak of my own attitude on the subject. You may know perhaps that in my early youth I wrote an extensive work on Biblical criticism which made quite a stir at the time and was the beginning of my fame. Probably in memory of this the University of Tübingen asked me the other day to accept from them an honorary diploma of doctor in theology. I gave instructions to reply that I accept with pleasure and gratitude. And today, after instituting the museum of Christian archaeology, I have signed the statute of the world-institute for free inquiry into the Scriptures from every possible point of view and in every possible direction, and for the study of all auxiliary subjects, with an annual budget of one and a half million marks. Will those of you who appreciate my attitude and can genuinely recognize me as their sovereign leader please come up here to the new doctor of theology."

A strange smile twisted for a moment the great man's beautiful lips. More than half of the learned theologians moved towards the platform, though with some hesitation and delay. All looked back at Professor Pauli who seemed to be glued to his seat. He hunched his back, huddled himself together and hung his head. The learned theologians who had

mounted the platform looked uncomfortable, and one of them, with a sudden wave of his hand, jumped straight down past the steps and ran, limping, to join Professor Pauli and the minority that had remained with him. Pauli raised his head and, getting up in an undecided sort of way, walked, followed by his staunch co-believers, past the empty benches and settled closer to the Elder John and the Pope Peter.

The emperor addressed them in a tone of sadness: "What more can I do for you? Strange men! What do you want of me? I do not know. Tell me yourselves, you Christians forsaken by most of your brothers and leaders and condemned by popular feeling: what is most precious to you in Christianity?"

Then, straight and slender like a white church candle, the Elder John stood up and answered gently: "Great emperor! Most precious to us in Christianity is Christ Himself—He Himself, and everything rests on Him, for we know that in Him all the fulness of Godhead dwells bodily. But from you too, sire, we are ready to receive every blessing if only we recognize in your bountiful hands the holy hand of Christ. And here is our straight answer to your question what you can do for us: confess now here before us Jesus Christ the Son of God, who came in the flesh, rose from the dead and is coming again—confess Him, and we will receive you with love as the true forerunner of His glorious second coming."

He paused and looked steadily at the emperor. Something evil was happening to the great man. The same hellish storm raged within him as on that fateful night. He completely lost his inner balance, and all his thoughts were concentrated on not losing external self-control and not giving himself away too soon. He was making superhuman efforts not to throw himself with a wild yell at the speaker and tear at him with his teeth. Suddenly he heard the familiar unearthly voice: "Be still and fear nothing." He remained silent. Only his darkened and death-like face was contorted and his eyes flashed.

While the Elder John was speaking, the great magician, who sat wrapped up in a voluminous three-colored cloak that completely hid his red robe of a cardinal, seemed to be doing some manipulations under it; there was a look of concentration in his glittering eyes, and his lips moved. Through the open windows of the temple a huge black cloud could be seen gathering, and soon everything turned dark. The Elder John was still gazing with fear and amazement at the silent emperor; suddenly he drew back in horror and, turning round, cried in a stifled voice: "Children, it's antichrist!" At that moment there was a deafening crash of thunder, a huge ball of lightning flared up in the temple and enveloped the Elder. All were stock-still for a moment. When the Christians recovered from the shock, the Elder John lay dead.

The emperor, pale but calm, addressed the assembly: "You have seen God's judgment. I did not wish for anyone's death, but my heavenly

Father avenges his beloved son. The case is settled. Who would dare to oppose the Almighty? Secretaries! write: "The ecumenical council of all Christians, when the fire from heaven had struck the insane opponent of the divine majesty, unanimously recognized the mighty emperor of Rome and the world as their supreme leader and lord."

Suddenly a word spoken loudly and clearly resounded through the temple: "*Contradicitur.*" Pope Peter the Second, purple in the face and shaking with anger, stood up and raised his staff in the emperor's direction. "Our only Lord is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. And what you are—you have just heard. Begone from us, you Cain! Begone, you vessel of the devil! By the power of Christ, I, the servant of the servants of God, forever expel you, a vile dog, from God's fold and deliver you to your father, Satan! Anathema, anathema, anathema!"

While he was speaking the great magician restlessly moved under his cloak; there was a clap of thunder louder than the last anathema, and the last of the Popes fell down dead.

"This is how all my enemies shall perish at my father's hand!" said the emperor.

"*Pereant, pereant!*" cried the trembling princes of the Church.

He turned and, leaning on the shoulder of the great magician, slowly walked out of the door at the back of the platform, followed by all his crowd. There were left in the hall two corpses and a throng of Christians half-dead with fear. The only person who had kept his self-possession was Professor Pauli. The general terror seemed to have roused all the powers of his spirit. His very appearance changed—he looked inspired and majestic. With resolute steps he mounted the platform and sitting down in the empty seat of one of the secretaries of state took up a piece of paper and began writing. When he had finished, he stood up and read aloud: "To the glory of our only Saviour Jesus Christ. From the ecumenical council of God's churches, gathered in Jerusalem: After our most blessed brother John, the representative of Eastern Christianity, had denounced the great deceiver and enemy of God as antichrist, foretold in Holy Writ, and our most blessed father Peter, the representative of Western Christianity, rightly and lawfully excommunicated him for life, the council, in the presence of the bodies of these two witnesses of Christ killed for the truth, has decided: cease all intercourse with the excommunicated and his vile conclave, and, withdrawing to the wilderness, await the impending coming of our true Lord Jesus Christ."

The crowd was filled with animation. There were loud cries of "*Adveniat! Adveniat cito! Komm, Herr Jesu, komm!* Come, Lord Jesus!"

Professor Pauli made a postscript and read: "Having unanimously adopted this first and last act of the last ecumenical council, we append our signatures thereto"—and he made a gesture of invitation to the assembly. All hastily mounted the platform and signed. The last to sign,

in large Gothic script. was "*duorum defunctorum testium locum tenens Ernst Pauli.*"

"Now let us go with our tabernacle of the last testament!" he said, pointing to the two dead men.

The bodies were put on stretchers. To the singing of Latin, German and Church-Slavonic hymns the Christians slowly walked to the exit from Haram-ash-Sharif. There the procession was stopped by a secretary of state, sent by the emperor and accompanied by an officer with a platoon of the guards. The soldiers stopped by the door, and the secretary read aloud: "The order of his divine majesty: to instill reason into the Christian people and protect them from evil-minded men who cause trouble and sedition, we have thought fit to exhibit the bodies of the two mischief-makers, killed by fire from heaven, in the street of the Christians (Haret-en-Nasara) at the entrance to their chief temple, called the temple of the Sepulchre and also of the Resurrection, so that all may convince themselves of their actual death. As to their partisans who maliciously reject all our benefactions and foolishly shut their eyes to obvious manifestations of the Deity, through our mercy and intercession with the heavenly Father they are spared death by heavenly fire which they deserve and are left entirely free except for the prohibition, for the sake of the common good, to dwell in cities and other populated places lest they disturb and offend innocent and simple-minded people by their evil inventions." When he had finished reading, eight soldiers, at a sign from the officer, approached the stretchers on which the bodies were laid.

"Let it be done as written," said Professor Pauli, and the Christians silently passed the stretchers to the soldiers, who carried them away through the north-western gates; the Christians went out by the north-eastern, and hastily left the town. They walked past the Mount of Olives along the road to Jericho, which the mounted police and two cavalry regiments had cleared of the crowds. It was decided to wait for a few days on the desert hills by Jericho. The following morning some Christian pilgrims of their acquaintance came from Jerusalem and told what had happened in Sion. After a state banquet all the members of the council were invited to the huge throne room (near the place where Solomon's throne is supposed to have stood), and the emperor, addressing the Catholic hierarchs, declared that the good of the Church obviously required of them immediately to elect a worthy successor of St. Peter; that under the present circumstances the election had to be held there and then; that the presence of the emperor as the leader and representative of the whole of Christendom would more than make up for omissions in the ritual, and that, in the name of all Christians, he suggested the sacred college should elect his beloved friend and brother Apollonius, so that the intimate bond between them would make the union between the Church and the state secure and indissoluble, to the

benefit of both. The sacred college withdrew to a special room for the conclave and in an hour and a half returned with the new Pope Apollonius.

While the election was being held the emperor was gently, wisely and eloquently persuading the Orthodox and Evangelical delegates to end their old discussions in view of the new great era in Christian history; he pledged his word that Apollonius would know how to do away forever with all the historical abuses of papacy. The Orthodox and Protestant delegates, convinced by his speech, drew up an act of union between the churches, and when, amidst joyful acclamations, Apollonius appeared on the platform with the cardinals, a Greek archbishop and an Evangelical minister presented their paper to him.

"Accipio et approbo et laetificatur cor meum," said Apollonius, signing the document. "I am a true Orthodox and a true Protestant as much as I am a true Catholic," he added and exchanged friendly kisses with the Greek and the German. Then he walked up to the emperor, who put his arms round him and held him in his embrace for some minutes.

Meanwhile curious points of light flitted in all directions about the palace and temple; they grew and transformed themselves into luminous forms of strange beings; flowers never seen on earth before fell in showers from above, filling the air with a mysterious fragrance. Delightful heart-melting sounds of strange musical instruments floated from on high, and angelic voices of invisible singers glorified the new lords of heaven and earth. In the meantime a terrible subterranean roar was heard in the north-western corner of the central palace under *kubbet-el-aruah*, i.e., the cupola of souls, where according to the Moslem tradition lies the entrance to Hades. When, at the emperor's invitation, the assembly moved in that direction, all clearly heard innumerable high-pitched and piercing voices—childrens' or devils'—calling out: "The time has come, release us, saviors, saviors, saviors!" But when Apollonius, pressing himself close to the wall, thrice shouted something to those under the earth in an unknown tongue, the voices were still and the subterranean roar subsided.

While all this was going on, an immense crowd of people surrounded Haram-ash-Sharif. When it grew dark, the emperor, together with the new Pope, came out on the eastern balcony, raising "a storm of enthusiasm." He graciously bowed in all directions, while Apollonius continually took from large baskets, brought to him by cardinals-deacons, and threw into the air magnificent Roman candles, rockets and fiery sprays, pearly-phosphorescent or bright rainbow-colored, that caught fire at the touch of his hand. On reaching the ground they all turned into innumerable different-colored sheets of paper with complete and unconditional indulgences for all sins, past, present and future. Popular rejoicing surpassed all bounds. True, some people said that they had seen

with their own eyes the indulgences turn into hideous toads and snakes; but an overwhelming majority were enthusiastic. Public festivities went on for a few more days, and the new miracle-working Pope performed things so wonderful and incredible that it would be quite useless to describe them.

During this time the Christians on the desert heights of Jericho devoted themselves to fasting and prayer. On the evening of the fourth day, after dark, Professor Pauli and nine companions made their way to Jerusalem with asses and a cart, and went by side streets to Haret-en-Nasara, approaching the entrance to the temple of the Resurrection, where the bodies of Pope Peter and the Elder John lay on the pavement. The streets were deserted at that hour, for the whole town had gone to Haram-ash-Sharif. The sentries on duty were fast asleep. The rescue party found that the bodies were untouched by corruption and had not even grown stiff or heavy. Putting them on the stretchers and covering them with cloaks brought for the purpose, the party returned by the same circuitous way to their people. As soon as they put the stretchers on the ground, the spirit of life returned to the dead. They stirred, trying to throw off the cloaks that covered them. With joyful cries all rushed to help them, and soon both the risen men were on their feet, safe and sound. And having come to life, the Elder John said: "Well, my dear children, so we are not parted after all. And this is what I tell you now: it is time we fulfilled Christ's prayer about His disciples that they should be one, as He and the Father are one. For the sake of this unity in Christ, my children, let us honor our beloved brother Peter. Let him pasture Christ's sheep at the last. There, brother!"—and he embraced Peter.

Professor Pauli came up to them. "*Tu es Petrus!*" said he to the Pope. "*Jetzt ist es ja gründlich erwiesen und ausser jedem Zweifel gesetzt.*"¹ And he warmly pressed Peter's hand with his right hand and gave his left to John, saying: "*So also, Väterchen, nun sind wir ja Eins in Christo.*"²

That was how the union of the churches took place on a dark night, in a high and solitary place. But the night's darkness was suddenly lit up with a bright light, and a great sign appeared in the sky: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. The sign remained in the same spot for some time, and then slowly moved southwards. Pope Peter raised his staff and cried: "This is our banner! Let us follow it!" And he walked in the direction of the vision, followed by both the elders and the whole crowd of Christians—towards God's Mount, Sinai. . . .

At this point the MS. breaks off, and Mr. Z. tells the end of the story as he heard it from "Father Pansophius" before Pansophius's death.

¹ "Now this is thoroughly proved and established beyond all doubt."

² "So now, Little Father, we are really one in Christ."

When the spiritual leaders and representatives of Christianity retired to the Arabian desert, where crowds of the faithful devotees of truth flocked to them from all countries of the world, the new Pope was able without hindrance to demoralize with his miracles all the other, superficial Christians, not disillusioned about antichrist. He declared that by the power of his keys he had opened the doors between the earthly world and the world beyond the grave, and indeed intercourse between the dead and the living, and also between men and demons, became a thing of everyday occurrence, and there developed new and unheard-of kinds of mystical fornication and idolatry. The emperor began to consider himself firmly established on the religious ground, and at the insistent suggestion of the secret "father's" voice declared himself to be the only true incarnation of the supreme Deity; but at this point he was faced with new trouble from an utterly unexpected quarter: the Jews rose up against him. This nation, numbering at the time some thirty millions, had a share in preparing and consolidating the superman's world-wide success. And when he moved to Jerusalem, secretly encouraging the Jewish rumors that his main purpose was to establish Israel's world domination, the Jews acknowledged him as their Messiah, and their enthusiastic devotion to him knew no bounds. But suddenly they rebelled, breathing anger and vengeance. This sudden change, no doubt predicted both by the Scriptures and the tradition, was explained by Father Pansophius perhaps rather too simply and realistically. The fact was that the Jews, who regarded the emperor as a full-blooded and perfect Israelite, accidentally discovered that he had not even been *circumcised*. On that very day the whole of Jerusalem and on the next day the whole of Palestine were in revolt. Boundless and ardent devotion to the savior of Israel, the promised Messiah, was replaced by hatred, as boundless and as ardent, for the perfidious deceiver, the impudent impostor. The whole of Jewry rose up like one man, and its enemies saw with surprise that in its real depths the soul of Israel lived not only by calculations and greed for gain, but by the power of heartfelt emotion—by the hope and wrath of its centuries-old messianic faith.

The emperor, who had not expected such a sudden outburst, lost his self-control and issued an edict sentencing to death all rebellious Jews and Christians. Many thousands and tens of thousands who had not had time to arm were slaughtered without mercy. But soon a million-strong army of Jews gained possession of Jerusalem and surrounded antichrist in Haram-ash-Sharif. He had at his disposal only a part of the guards and could not cope with the massed army. With the help of his Pope's magical arts the emperor succeeded in making his way through the besiegers' ranks, and soon again appeared in Syria with an innumerable army of different heathen tribes. The Jews set out to meet him with small hope of success. But just as the advance guards of both armies were about to

meet, there was an earthquake of unheard-of violence: under the Dead Sea, in the vicinity of which the emperor's troops encamped, a huge volcano burst open and rivers of fire, merging into one flaming lake, swallowed up the emperor with his numberless regiments and his inseparable companion Pope Apollonius, whose magic proved of no avail. The Jews ran towards Jerusalem in fear and trembling, calling on the God of Israel to save them. As they came in sight of the holy city, the sky was rent in two by a great lightning reaching from east to west, and they saw Christ coming down from heaven in royal array with wounds from the nails in His outstretched hands. At the same time a crowd of Christians led by Peter, John and Paul was approaching Sion from Sinai, and from all sides other enthusiastic crowds were running: those were the Jews and Christians executed by antichrist. They came to life again and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.