

## **The Orthodox Church and the Third Millennium**

It is a great honor for me and a real pleasure to be invited to lecture in this institution and address you this evening. I should like to thank particularly the dean of this faculty, Archimandrite Paul, a former student of the theological faculty of Thessalonika, for this invitation. I have always looked at this institution with admiration. For it is indeed one of the most important theological centers in the entire Orthodox world. His Holiness, the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, Ignatius IV, in cooperation with the rest of the distinguished hierarchs of the Patriarchate and with the body of professors and students, has managed to bring a new spirit to this theological faculty so that it may broaden its horizons, and serve the Church in the best way in our times. The entire Orthodox Church is very grateful to the Patriarchate of Antioch for the contribution it makes through institutions like this to the spiritual welfare of Orthodoxy.

The close of the twentieth century and the arrival of the new millennium are part of our conventional conception of time, and in this sense they are of no fundamental significance for us Christians. The fact that many festivities will take place all over the world on this occasion should not lead us to think that there is a particular significance in any change of the calendar years, since for us the significant changes in time are related only to the great events of salvation history that we celebrate liturgically in the feasts of our Church. And yet, even in such conventional changes of time, Christians should pause and reflect. Not only each one of us personally, but also the Church as a whole must use this as an occasion for reflection and even self-examination and self-criticism. It is in such a spirit that I propose to submit to your consideration certain reflections on the way the Christian Church understands its ministry and its witness in the beginning of the new millennium.

What kind of a world have we inherited from the 20th century and from the expiring millennium? And what problems and possibilities lie ahead of us? What can the Orthodox Church in particular witness to in the context of the world as it appears to be at the beginning of the new millennium?

## **I. Christian history: a cause for both joy and disappointment**

If we look back at the two thousand years of Christian history, we shall be overwhelmed at the same time with both joy and disappointment. The reasons for joy and satisfaction are the following:

The very fact of the Church's survival. This is by no means a simple matter to be taken for granted. The Church was born in a hostile world and suffered severe persecutions not only in the first century, but even in our own times. In spite of all this, she still exists. The words of St. Paul, "we die and, look, we are still alive," apply fully to the Church's history, at least until now. How is this to be explained? Perhaps by sheer chance and historical circumstance, as a rationalist would say. For us believers, the answer lies in our Lord's words that "not even the gates of hell will overcome the Church." Be that as it may, we cannot but be thankful to God for having preserved the Church in existence over the centuries.

The fact that the basic traditions and structure of the Church have been preserved in spite of the Church's involvement in so many influences from cultural contexts is also a great miracle. The Church lives in the world, but she is not of the world. The frontiers between Church and world are always difficult to establish. This will always be the fundamental problem of the Church: that is, the preservation of her identity without withdrawing from the world into a ghetto.

Moreover, the Church has made an impact on culture wherever she found herself. This was the case not only in Byzantium or in the Middle Ages in the West where we can almost speak of a Christian culture. It was also true even in modern times when the Church in the West was officially and emphatically pushed aside as an irrelevant factor in the creation of humanistic culture. Many of the humanistic and moral values of modern society are nothing but Christian principles of moral behavior. The Church has not been as irrelevant to human life as some people have wanted her to be.

There are many reasons for the Orthodox Church to be thankful to God. We have never been politically powerful except perhaps in Byzantium or in some modern nations where there is an Orthodox majority. But even in those cases, we have willingly developed institutions such as monasticism in order to remind ourselves that the Church does not belong to the world. Overall the days of suffering and humiliation have by far outnumbered those of glory and secular power in the history of Orthodoxy. Our Church can boast more for her martyrs and ascetics than for her worldly power. We can only thank God for that. For as Paul put it, "God's power is perfected in weakness." Especially in the twentieth century, the Orthodox Church has good reasons to be thankful to our Lord for the fact that Orthodox theology has recovered its patristic roots, realized the importance of the *lex orandi*, particularly of the Holy Eucharist, and rediscovered the spirit of the Desert Fathers in and through a monastic renaissance of impressive dimensions. All this has been witnessed to in the context of the ecumenical movement in which the witness of Orthodoxy has been very strong in spite of our rather weak participation in it.

As to the disappointments and failures, there is, I am afraid, a great deal to feel sorry and repent for.

There is a failure to Christianize the world truly and deeply. The Church's mission has been either insufficient, as with us Orthodox, or essentially un-Christian, as it has happened with much of the missionary zeal and activities of Western Christians. We have mixed up the Gospel with the national and cultural values of a particular time. And we have thus failed to achieve a true enculturation of the Church. In many cases, Christian missions have been confused with the imposition of Christianity on certain peoples without regard to culture. Christianity has not loved human beings as much as its Lord did, and we must be sorry for that.

There is also the tragic division of Christianity itself. The second millennium, especially, has witnessed polemic and hatred among Christians previously unheard of in history. There is little point in trying to prove who is to blame for that. Our Desert Fathers have taught us that we should always blame ourselves for the sins of all others. Today there is a tendency among the Orthodox to stress the responsibility of Western Christians for the evil of division and for the wrongs done to the Orthodox Church by our Western brothers. History is, of course, clear in witnessing to the

fact of a great deal of aggression against the Orthodox on the part of the West. Deep however in the tragic reality of Christian division lies also an inability of the Orthodox to overcome and rise above the psychology of polemic in a true spirit of forgiveness and love. Confessional zeal has often proved stronger than these. The second millennium has been in this respect almost an unfortunate period of the Church's history.

There has been a failure to interpret the Gospel in existential terms. Fundamentalism, confessionalism, and conservatism have killed the Bible and the dogmas of the Church, turning them into formulae to be preserved rather than lived and experienced. Dogma and ethics have been separated. And the same has happened with the *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*. Piety and theology have become two different domains. In fact the more pious one is, the less of a theologian he or she is. Similar dichotomies have occurred between dogma and canon law, or ecclesiology and Church administration. Bishops have become administrators, and it is almost a disqualification for them if they happen to be theologians. All this has led to a marginalization of theology from ordinary life, even from Church life.

There has been, particularly for us Orthodox, an infiltration of the Church by nationalism and sometimes ethnophyletism. The idea of autocephaly has become autocephalism, that is, using the Church to serve national or phyletic interests. The situation with the Orthodox Diaspora in the twentieth century is in direct and open violation of Orthodox ecclesiology. There can be little doubt that we cannot be proud and happy with such a situation, although unfortunately we seem to have blessed it in the most official way.

This is what we have inherited from the past, from two millennia of Church history, some of it offering us reasons to be thankful, some giving us grounds for repentance. An awareness of both of these will be extremely helpful as we approach the new millennium. The problems that this new historical period brings with it will demand a lot of reconsideration of our past.

## **II. The most important issues in the new millennium?**

We are all familiar by now with the famous theory of an American political theorist of our days, who sees in the new millennium the period of what he describes as "a clash of cultures." Whether he is right or not in

his predictions, it remains true for the Church that one of the main problems she will have to face will be, and I think has always been, that of enculturation. What will the Church do in relation to this issue?

When the Christian Gospel was preached to the Greeks, it was confronted with a culture that was not only different from, but one could say deeply opposed to the one that, historically, produced the Gospel—namely the Semitic culture. Historians argue the extent to which Hellenic culture had infiltrated Judaism at the time of Jesus. But a study of the Patristic period reveals that the enculturation of the Gospel in the Greco-Roman world of antiquity was by no means an easy task.

The problem was not simply how to replace polytheism with the biblical faith in one God. It went much deeper, touching the very ethos and mentality, the very worldview of Greek culture. As is evident from the reaction of Greek philosophers in the first century, such as Celsus and the “Neoplatonists,” the Greek mind could not absorb the historical outlook that Christianity brought with it, including faith in God’s Incarnation and the resurrection of the dead. At an even deeper level, the enculturation of Christianity in the Patristic period stumbled at the Greek worldview which gave priority to the “one,” the unity of the universe and its cyclical and orderly movements, at the expense of the “many,” that is, particular and concrete beings, to the point of regarding the “many” as identical with the Fall or with evil. In other words, a Gospel which carried with it a respect for history and an eschatological outlook with regard to the end of the history as having greater significance than the beginning of things, had to become part of a culture that mistrusted history and regarded the beginning of things as more decisive than the end or the *eschaton*. And yet enculturation did take place at that time. Views may differ among scholars as to whether it was a successful enculturation, faithful to the Gospel, or as Harnack put it, an “acute Hellenization” of it. Certainly from the point of view of our own Orthodox tradition, what happened in the Patristic era was indeed a successful enculturation, since the purity of the Gospel was not lost through it. What happened in the Patristic era may therefore be proposed, not perhaps as model to be copied, but certainly as an example from which we can draw some lessons in our present-day situation. What could these lessons be?

In the first place, we must note that the Church at that time was aware of the weaknesses of the Greek culture and the fact that this culture

had exhausted its possibilities. This diagnosis of the end of their world allowed the Church Fathers, both Greek and Latin, to place the Gospel in a critical attitude toward ancient culture and to propose alternatives to it. The situation we are in today is not different from this point of view, only that the Church cannot stand face to face with culture since, to some extent, it has contributed to its creation. In any case, what the Church should note today is that we live at the end of an historical culture shaped by the Enlightenment, and that the Gospel should be detached from it and be presented as an alternative to this culture. If the Church fails to do this, others may step in to answer man's needs at the present period of transition, as I fear they are doing already. In the Patristic period the fact that the Church entered into a deep dialogue with the surrounding culture prevented others from stepping in. We must draw from this the lesson that the Church in our days must play a leading part in dialoguing with the prevailing culture at the deepest level, if it is to avoid marginalization.

Secondly, the Greek Fathers did not take simply a critical view of Hellenic culture, but entered deeply into it and established creative links with its premises. This took various forms. At the level of worship, for example, many things were accepted and Christianized, such as natural feasts and rituals of all kinds. On the level of philosophy, all questions raised by the Greek mind were regarded as legitimate, above all the ontological concern of the Greek mind, which was to a great extent alien to the Bible and Semitic culture. Philosophical terminology was unhesitatingly borrowed and used in theology. Greek language was adopted in non-Greek speaking parts, while the use of Latin in the West never presented a problem for the Church's unity.

All this did not take place at the expense of the Gospel. The eschatological orientation of the Bible was preserved through the centrality of the Resurrection, the iconic representation of the Kingdom in the Eucharist, the strong emphasis placed on community and monasticism as a form of protest against secularization, etc. In other words, enculturation can and must employ all forms of a given culture, provided that the basic aspects of the biblical outlook are maintained. The Church in these cases must be aware of what is important and must be maintained at all costs, and what can be changed. This is no easy task, as the history of the Patristic period itself shows. This underlines the crucial importance of theology in all forms of enculturation. Theology must try to reach conver-

gence with regard to what constitutes the essential aspects of the Gospel, which must be maintained, albeit expressed in different cultural forms. Enculturation without theological awareness and sensitivity can be a very dangerous matter.

So much for history. Theology on the other hand, at the level of doctrine, relates to the issue of enculturation via a Christology conditioned by the Spirit. Enculturation is a demand of the doctrine of the Incarnation. By entering and sharing fully the human condition, God in the person of Christ made it imperative that His Church constantly allows Him to enter fully into every culture. The fact that the Son of God entered a specific culture, that is the Hebrew or Jewish milieu of a certain time in history, may be easily taken to imply that He sanctified and affirmed only that particular culture, thus calling for all other cultures to be converted. Indeed, a Christology which is not Pneumatologically conditioned may lead to such a conclusion. Pneumatology, however, points to a Christology that is eschatological and therefore inclusive. The Christ of the Spirit is not an individual conceivable in Himself, but He has a Body. He is the first born among many brethren. And this may be extended to the point of making him a “cosmic Christ,” and an ἀνακεφαλαιώσις of all. There is no race and no culture to which He can be irrelevant. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, He can be enculturated in all places, and at all times.

This stress on Pneumatology with reference to enculturation is not the same as the one encountered so often nowadays, according to which all cultures somehow contained the presence of the Holy Spirit. A Pneumatology which is separated from Christology is just as bad as a Christology without Pneumatology. The Holy Spirit is present everywhere. He blows whenever He wills and fills all things, as the prayer says. But He never acts away from Christ or independently of Him. There is no “economy of the Holy Spirit.” There is only the economy of the Son. Enculturation inevitably involves the Incarnation of Christ, be it in forms other than the historical one. Instead of making of the Holy Spirit a divine Person that works outside Christ, it is better to regard Him as the Person who makes Christ inclusive, that is, eschatological. In the Spirit Christ ceases to be Jewish or Greek (“In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek”), while in some sense *being* all that at the same time. The Spirit allows Christ to enter again and again in every culture and assume it by purifying it, that is by placing it in the light—one might say under the judge-

ment—of what is ultimately meaningful as it is revealed in Christ. All this allows for a variety of cultural expressions of the one Christ.

The question of whether there is such a thing as Christian culture, that is, a culture to be applied universally in the name of Christ, should be answered in the negative. A great deal of damage has been done to the Gospel whenever the Church's mission has been understood as the promotion, and quite often the imposition, of a certain culture. This does not mean that the Gospel must be totally divorced from all cultural forms in order to be preached. It rather means that mission should respect the freedom of the people to express the Faith in their own way, provided that the fundamental outlook or worldview remains the one brought by the Gospel.

Enculturation therefore requires discernment, a discernment that the Spirit offers through theological consciousness, through Orthodoxy in the original sense. The role of the Church in each enculturation is therefore of paramount importance and consists in overseeing and making sure that the new cultural forms embody and not destroy the basic existential outlook that the Gospel of Christ brings to the world. For culture is a very complex matter and cannot always be distinguished from the worldview it expresses. Theology must provide the Church with the fundamental guidelines that will enable her to judge in a given case which cultural forms embody the Gospel faithfully, and which express in fact "another Gospel." In any case, the Church must apply theological and not simply ethical criteria, which can often be identical with cultural ones. Questions, for example, of whether or not magic or polygamy, and its opposite, monogamy, constitute ethical matters in the cultural context of Africa, or relate to the basic outlook of the Gospel, is possible to decide only if we know in what this outlook consists. This is something that the theological consciousness of the Church can provide us with.

Raising therefore the fundamental or ultimate questions concerning the way of being that Christ represents in the Spirit will be extremely important in the new millennium, when the enculturation of Christianity will be once again crucial for the Church's existence.

Enculturation in the new millennium will meet a number of challenges, which the Church must face.

1. *The challenge of non-Christian faiths*

We are moving rapidly into a religiously pluralistic world. How should the Church react to this? The first thing that Christianity must do

is to abandon its aggressive missionary methods of past times. Evangelization should not involve coercion of any sort, even of the most delicate kind. Secondly, Christian theology must rethink its position with respect to what may be called religious pluralism. Historically different views have been expressed and practiced with regard to this matter. The view that prevailed in the past was a Christomonistic one: only those who believe in Christ can be saved. This view prevailed particularly among Protestants of what we may call the "Barthian approach." It is a view that inspired many missionary movements in the West in the last few centuries. This view has been challenged within Protestant theology itself in our time. There are Protestant theologians today who wish to promote the idea of what may be called a "cosmic Christ," that is of a Christology large enough to include even in the term "Christ" those of other religions who, consciously or unconsciously, are looking for what we Christians call "Christ." This enlargement of Christology seems to be favored particularly among Protestant Christians living in areas like India and Japan, where Christianity is in the position of a minority. They believe that, in their situation, the traditional, narrowly Christocentric position makes no sense.

Within Roman Catholic theology, the view that has prevailed historically is marked by the principle going back to St. Cyprian (in fact it can be traced back to Origen in the third century), "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*," or "there is no salvation outside the Church." By the term "Church" was meant, in the past, the Roman Catholic Church, a view that has been radically modified in our century, especially since the Second Vatican Council, through the idea of degrees of communion: those belonging to the Church of Rome are in full communion with the Church, whereas those outside the Roman Catholic Church are only partially in the Body of Christ. With regard to the non-Christian religions, Roman Catholic theology is beginning to promote an open position *vis-à-vis* the phenomenon of religious pluralism. An international commission of the Vatican published recently a very open report on the relationship between Christianity and other religions, while books like that of the former professor of the Gregorian University of Rome, Jacques Dupuis, suggest an approach to religious pluralism as a phenomenon which forms part of the plan of God for humanity.

Orthodox theology has not pronounced itself officially on this point. There are those who hold a rigid position similar to that of the Roman Catholics and the Protestants of the past. But there have also been

more open views, which can be classified in two categories. One of these is based on Pneumatology. The other is based on eschatology. The first one makes a sharp distinction between the work of Christ and the role of the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation. This distinction takes as a starting point, more or less, the Russian theologian Vladimir Lossky's, idea of "two economies," that of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's work, according to this view, is not limited to the Church and the Christians, but extends to all humanity and creation. The other religions, therefore, are not outside the sphere of the Holy Spirit's operation, although it may be said that they fall outside Christ.

The eschatological view, on the other hand, is based on a different argument. Until the Last Judgement we cannot say with absolute certainty who does not belong to Christ and who is not saved. Let us note the word "not." The argument does not imply that there is agnosticism and uncertainty with regard to Christ and the Church as the sure way to God and to salvation. The agnosticism and the uncertainty concern only those who do not believe in Christ and are not members of his Church. This position allows for a positive attitude toward non-Christians and makes better sense than the argument from Pneumatology. It is in fact only reasonable for the Christian Church, living under the obscurities of history, to leave it to God to reveal His final Judgement concerning each person's salvation, when He decides to do so. This does not relativize Christ or the Church. As far as we know, the Church as the Body of Christ is the only sure and safe way to God, establishing the proper relationship of the human being to God. We cannot therefore propose as Christians any better way than the one we know. We stand firmly on this faith. But it is only in the final Judgement of God that we can see who, even from among the Christians, will be saved.

Such a position differs from religious syncretism. In syncretism, the assumption accepted by all parties which participate in it, is that every religion has something positive to contribute. And it is by collecting, so to speak, the various contributions they can make that we arrive at a totality, a whole, which amounts in fact to a new religion of some kind. This is what syncretism means. In a non-syncretistic approach, each religion may recognize positive elements in another religion, but sees and judges these elements in the light of its own faith, and certainly not as forming part of a new religion.

This leads to my third point concerning what, in my view, Christianity should do *vis-à-vis* the religious pluralism of our times. Excluding totally the idea of establishing a new religion by turning religious pluralism into religious syncretism, and given the attitude of non-rejection on the basis of what had just been said, the only sensible and right thing for Christianity to do would be to enter into dialogue with other faiths. Such a dialogue must be constructive and cannot be an inter-religious dialogue in the absence of religious conviction. Christianity must strengthen and deepen its theology, not narrow and water it down to a kind of religious agnosticism or relativism. Dialogue does not mean indifference to truth or relativization. On the contrary, it means conviction, yet without stubbornness, fidelity combined with openness. Dialogue is a step further than tolerance. It involves the recognition that the other, the different, exists not simply in order to exist—that is what tolerance means—but exists as someone who has something to say to me, which I have to listen to seriously, relate to my own convictions, and judge under and in light of these convictions.

But what is it that the other will say to me in a dialogue of this type? A dialogue does not only need partners; it requires also a subject. What would the partners involved in such a dialogue speak about? Should it be about politics and the role of religion in the various national and other conflicts in the world? This might be an opportune and to some people, mainly politicians, a useful and welcomed thing. But it is doubtful that such a subject would be approached constructively. The result would most certainly be a negative one. For this reason, I suggest that the dialogue with religions we are talking about should have a different agenda. It should place us before the burning issues of humanity as we approach the third millennium. Religion is not about religion, even less about religions. Religion is about human beings and their relation with God, with one another, and with creation. Religions must face the challenges of our times.

## *2. The challenge of technology and globalization*

The world is shrinking. We all know that by now. There are good things to be said about that, but there are also serious dangers. We cannot remain indifferent. The great problem in the coming century will be globalization: how to reconcile the “one” and the “many”? How to avoid achieving universal unity at the expense of local diversity; how to allow difference not

simply to exist and be tolerated, but to contribute to the benefit of humanity? We must take a stance on this matter. We must explain our faith and offer solutions. We must inform our faithful and contribute accordingly to the formation of a universal consciousness on this matter.

### *3. The ecological challenge*

This is probably the most serious problem facing humanity today. It cuts across nations and continents. Christianity shares a great deal of the responsibility for the ecological crisis. This is recognized by all. Fortunately it is also in a position to contribute very much to the solution of the problem. This is also beginning to be recognized. A dialogue on such a subject can bring together to the same table even those involved in national and political conflicts. This could be a constructive use of religious pluralism with beneficial consequences in many other respects.

### *4. The challenge from scientific advances*

There is hardly anyone these days who does not feel alarmed by the news concerning advances in biology and genetics. Only yesterday, on my way here, I read in the press that scientists have managed to map more of our chromosomes, thus making it possible to manipulate life itself. Certainly we cannot watch what is going on with indifference. This is a subject that requires theological reflection. And it is so new that such a reflection is bound to be an extremely complex matter. But it is rather naive, allow me to say, to assume that the problem of bioethics can simply be a matter of state legislation. World opinion must be formed, and religion is a major factor in forming and informing the human conscience. No theological dialogue can have an effect, if it does not address issues of this kind.

## **III. What should the Orthodox Church do in the face of the challenges of the third millennium?**

Here are some personal thoughts on this crucial question. First, Orthodox theology must review its language. We have inherited a rich dogmatic tradition and we must keep it faithfully and not change anything in it. We probably need no new dogmas. But this does not mean that we must conserve dogmas as archeological treasures. We certainly need an interpretation of our dogmas in existential terms.

What for example does it mean for today's man that God is Trinity? Does it throw any light on problems such as those created by individualism, or universalism, that mark our present culture? What does an ecclesiology of the catholicity of the local Church have to say to the issue of globalization, which is beginning to dominate the world's agenda as we have noted it?

We can mention any dogma of our Church, since there is no dogma of our Church that does not have to say something about the actual problems of humanity.

Orthodoxy must begin to answer cultural questions not with ethics but with dogmas; that is it must interpret its dogmatics existentially. The Orthodox Church must draw more and more from its liturgical life, particularly the Eucharist. The Eucharist is not one sacrament among many. It is the summing up or the *ἀνακεφαλαιωσις* of the entire reality of the salvation of the world. We have to bring our Liturgy more into the discussion of the new cultural problems. In order to do that we must first pay attention to the way we celebrate the Eucharist and worship. Liturgical rite is not mere ritual. It is theology and it has profound existential significance. We must celebrate the Liturgy properly if we are to offer anything to the world of existential significance. Secondly, we must interpret our Liturgy in existential terms. We need, in other words, a liturgical dogmatics, or a dogmatics understood and expressed liturgically. This will be our particular gift to the world in the twenty-first century.

Together with our Liturgy we must cultivate our monastic tradition, in the true spirit of the monasticism of the Desert Fathers. There is a remarkable revival of Orthodox monasticism in our times. But the spirit of the Desert Fathers—that is, the spirit of self-blaming or taking upon oneself the sins of the world—is often replaced in our monasticism by that of aggressive zealotism, which defeats the very purpose of asceticism. The world will need the spirit of genuine monasticism more and more, as it is overcome by the greed of utilitarianism and self-justification that mark today's culture.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, the Orthodox Church enters the third millennium with no political or economic power. On the contrary, it enters it with secular weakness to the point of putting into question its very survival in the next millennium. All Orthodox Churches are in difficulties, and they will be more so in the future. The strength of Ortho-

doxy is not in any secular power. It is in its Tradition, both dogmatically and liturgically, yet only on the condition that this Tradition is interpreted in a way that would make it relevant to the existential needs of humanity. It is no longer enough to preserve our Tradition. Our forefathers did that very well. We must not make Orthodoxy an exotic religion, as it appears to so many Western Christians. We must engage in its interpretation in the light of today's and tomorrow's basic existential concerns. Theology is and will be more and more the *sine qua non* condition for the survival of the Orthodox Church in the new millennium. Theology is the strength of the Orthodox Church. Orthodox theology should not fear dialogue with anyone. Its duty is to engage in dialogue. It is the only way for it to assert its uniqueness, its importance, its indispensability. It is the only way to avoid turning the Orthodox Church into a ghetto in today's world.

We are celebrating today the patron saint of this faculty, St. John of Damascus, a local saint who became a universal theologian. As in his own time, Orthodox theology today is preached in a non-Christian cultural context. And this will be the more so in the coming century. The vigor of this faculty promises that its contribution to the witness of the Orthodox Church in the years to come will be important. We wish it the blessing of God, so that together with the rest of the Orthodox theological resources, it may bring the witness of Truth that the Orthodox Church confesses to a world that will need it more and more in the coming millennium. It has been said by a renowned British Byzantinologist that the twenty-first century will be the century of Orthodoxy. This should not make us boast. It should rather make us feel more strongly the immense responsibility placed on our weak shoulders to witness to the Truth. It is with such a feeling that I have presented to you my modest reflections this evening.