

**ESSAYS ON TRUE ORTHODOX
CHRISTIANITY**

Volume 3 (2015)

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of essays is the third in a series, and includes articles I have written on various subjects related to True Orthodoxy in the course of 2015.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us!

*January 7/20, 2016.
Afterfeast of the Holy Theophany.
Synaxis of St. John the Baptist.*

1. "LEVIATHAN" AND MODERN RUSSIA

The great power and justification of art is that in the hands of a master it can tell the truth about God and life in a way that penetrates the minds and hearts of unbelievers and semi-believers in a way that even the best sermon often cannot. This is not to say that it can take the place of the sermon; but it can prepare the way for the better reception of the sermon at a later date. In this lies the significance of the recently released Russian film "Leviathan".¹

The title of the film is well-chosen and gives a preliminary indication of its content and meaning. The film, as the director Andrei Zvyagintsev himself has indicated, is a modern parable based on the Book of Job; Leviathan refers to the sea-monster in the 41st chapter of Job – just before Job's vindication and the resurrection of his fortunes in chapter 42. A passage from this chapter is quoted by a local priest to the unfortunate hero. The leviathan is both the greatest of all sea-monsters and a symbol (as in the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes' famous work, *Leviathan*) of absolutist political power: "Upon the earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over the children of pride..." (Job 41.33-34).

It would be easy, therefore, to see in the Leviathan of the film the state power of the present-day Russian Federation in all its absolutist, pitiless might. And this is certainly part of the meaning. But the film is deeper and more complex than that; it is much more than a work of political protest. The film, as Monk Diodor (Larionov) has written in a fine review, is not about the corrupt state, nor about the alcoholics, adulteresses, murderers and phoney priests that use it or are abused by it. It is about *God*.²

The opening sequence displays the savage but strangely beautiful setting of the action - a small town on the Murmansk peninsula, on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. The carcasses of whales and abandoned fishing boats litter the landscape, which is formed by massive granite boulders and the unceasing crash of the waves. It reminds us that this scenery - and God Who created it - was there long before any human leviathans existed, and will continue after the present one has become another corpse.

After this peaceful, somber opening, the action is slow to pick up speed, but quickly develops until its tragic climax, when the life of the hero appears to have been completely destroyed. One is reminded of Dostoyevsky's *The Devils*, which begins with similar slowness but speeds up until the final catastrophe. The main contest is between the hero and a corrupt mayor who wants to destroy his house in order to redevelop the land. The contest is an unequal one, and the hero loses - and not only his house. But who is to blame?

¹ The whole film (with English subtitles) can be seen on youtube: <http://parkino.net/2014-09-leviafan.php>.

² Larionov, "O Fil'me 'Leviafane'", <http://www.kiev-orthodox.org/site/faithculture/5602>.

The answer is obvious, and yet not obvious. The main villain is undoubtedly the mayor, who represents the corrupt State, Leviathan, most directly (he has a portrait of Putin in his office). And yet when presented with firm evidence of his past evil-doing by the hero's lawyer, he begins to have twinges of conscience, and goes to consult the local bishop – but without telling him what is really on his mind. The bishop gives sound text-book advice, such as “All authority is from God”, but his words are strangely lifeless and do not help the mayor; we feel that he must know the truth about the mayor, and it becomes clear that he, too, is part of Leviathan. So he, and the Church he represents, is also to blame...

Nor is the hero himself blameless. He drinks too much, is uncontrolled in his speech, has not brought up his son well, and has stopped going to church. Like most of the characters in the story, - with the exception of the lawyer, who, as he says, prefers “facts”, - he has some belief in God, but it is not firm, not clear. And ultimately we come to the conclusion that while the hero is a victim of Leviathan, he has also grown up in it and with it and has therefore shared in its original sin. So he, too, is to blame, even if to a lesser degree...

However, this is not a tale of crime and punishment. And not simply because those whom we feel are least guilty get punished the most severely, while the most guilty get away with murder while speaking pompously and hypocritically about “truth”. Nor are we given any assurance, as in the Book of Job, that good will triumph over evil and the righteous will receive their reward from God. After all, this is a work of art, not a sermon, and its author is not trying to teach us anything, he is not a theologian. And yet we can learn something from it – something very important.

*

In trying to express what this “something” is, we should first take note of the unprecedented reaction to the film in Russia. Although it has received huge critical acclaim outside Russia, winning numerous prizes and being nominated for an Oscar (the first such nomination for a Russian film since 1964), the Russian authorities, both political and ecclesiastical, have turned their backs on it, as if the film had betrayed both the nation and the Church. This only goes to show that the film has hit its mark; the truth it portrays so accurately has hurt. While the salt of the official church has so tragically lost its savour, the film has supplied the vinegar necessary to expose the wound. This is encouraging; it shows that the pen (or at any rate, the film-script) is still stronger than the sword in contemporary Russia, and the traditional function of Russian literature since Gogol – to be the moral conscience of the semi-apostate educated classes – has not ceased... But while we might have expected the authorities to have reacted in this way, it is perhaps more surprising that so many ordinary people have reacted with similar disgust. These are the “patriots” who support Putin and the neo-Soviet state, whose politics and aesthetic and moral tastes are evidently closely linked.

We should not be surprised. Back in the 1970s Solzhenitsyn and others were declaring that if only the evil communists were removed, the untouched innocence of the Russian people would manifest itself in an almost immediate resurrection of Holy Rus'. It did not happen like that, and the film tells us why. For the truth, as demonstrated by the film, is that the Soviet Leviathan has corrupted not only the atheists and party members. It has also destroyed the official church, which has now quite clearly lost the Grace of God, and has penetrated deep, very deep, into the consciousness of the ordinary people, who are at the same time the victims of Leviathan and the unconscious carriers of its foul spirit. The terrible truth is that those who truly fight against Leviathan in contemporary Russia are a small minority whose views are not heard in the public media (although they can be heard on Facebook). Thus more accurate than Solzhenitsyn in his predictions was Hieromartyr Joseph, the last true Metropolitan of Petrograd (+1937), who said: "Perhaps the last 'rebels' against the betrayers of the Church and the accomplices of her ruin will be not only bishops and not archpriests, but the simplest mortals, just as at the Cross of Christ His last gasp of suffering was heard by a few simple souls who were close to Him..."

Of course, we are not claiming that such thoughts were in the mind of Zvyagintsev, still less that he deliberately set out to convey such a message. But it is a conclusion that we can legitimately draw from the film if we accept its basic truthfulness - the conclusion, namely, that Sovietism is not the sin of certain outdated or isolated individuals at the summit of power, but a collective, systemic sin of society as a whole, which has to be analysed to its very roots and destroyed at the root. Just as the original sin of Adam and Eve became the sin of all their descendants, and is only extirpated in Holy Baptism, so the original sin of the Bolsheviks became the sin of the whole of Soviet society, and will only be extirpated through the thorough repentance of the whole of the people.

More hesitantly, but with firm hope, we can draw another conclusion: that this Soviet Leviathan has not long to live, that it will soon be numbered among the skeletons of the whales that litter the sea-shore in this film. And that the people that today remain under its power, by contemplating the eternal, incorruptible power behind the granite rocks and ocean waves, will at last find the grace to shake off the tyranny of sin. For "yonder be fallen all they that work iniquity; they are cast out, and shall not be able to stand" (Psalm 35.13). "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, nor envy them that work iniquity. For like grass quickly shall they be withered, and like green herbs quickly shall they fall away" (Psalm 36.1-2).

*January 7/20, 2015.
Synaxis of St. John the Baptist.*

2. SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN

We are all familiar with the Gospel passage: *Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."* (Matthew 18.22).

The usual interpretation of this passage is that just as God's mercy to penitent sinners is not limited, but infinite, so our forgiveness should be unlimited towards those who sin against us. As Blessed Theophylact says: "What he means here is an infinite number, as if He were saying, 'However many times he sins and repents, forgive him.'"³ This teaching was in sharp contrast to that of the rabbis, who, basing themselves on a false interpretation of Amos 2.6, taught that sinners should be forgiven no more than three times.

Now the phrase "seventy times seven" reminds us of another passage from the Old Testament. This has to do, not with mercy and forgiveness, but with vengeance: *Lamech said to his wives...: "I have slain a man for wounding me, and a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged seven times, truly Lamech seventy times seven"* (Genesis 4.23-24). The context is the first murder in world history, Cain's killing of Abel. Cain feared that he would be killed by his relatives for his crime, but God placed a mark on him protecting him, and declared that if anyone killed Cain, he would be avenged seven times (4.15). Lamech admits that he has committed the same sin. And he says that vengeance should be carried out on him seventy times seven.

These two passages from the Old and New Testaments are obviously parallel to each other and invite comparison; so we let us see what the Holy Fathers say about the more difficult passage from Genesis... But let us first note the significance of the number seven. Seven denotes the fullness of time insofar as our whole life is composed of weeks having seven days in each. Therefore a sin that is mortal is worthy of seven times avengement, that is, deserves a life sentence, which, as Cain says, is "unbearable" (Genesis 4.13). But just as, if we add one to seven, we get eight, which frees us from the cycle of time and brings us out into eternity, so if we as it were add God, whose symbol is one, to mortal sin, we get forgiveness, the abolition of sin, and, if not a return to Paradise, at any rate an unburdened conscience.

Now St. Basil the Great writes in Lamech's name: "'If Cain is avenged seven times, truly Lamech seventy times seven.' It is right for me to undergo four hundred and ninety chastisements, if truly God's judgement against Cain is just, that he should undergo seven punishments. In fact, as he did not learn to murder from another, so he did not see the murderer undergoing the penalty.

³ *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1992, p. 158.

But I, having before my eyes the man groaning and trembling and also the greatness of the anger of God, was not brought to my senses by the example. Therefore I deserve to pay four hundred and ninety penalties."⁴

St. John Chrysostom has another interpretation, but one that is perfectly compatible with St. Basil's: "The denial of guilt after the committing of sin proves worse than the sins themselves. This was the condition of that man [Cain] who killed his brother and who when questioned by the loving God did not merely decline to confess his crime but even dared to lie to God and thus caused his life to be lengthened. Accordingly Lamech, when he fell into the same sins, arrived at the conclusion that denial would only lead to receiving a severer punishment, and so he summoned his wives, without anyone's accusing or charging him, and made a personal confession of his sins to them in his own words. By comparing what he had done to the crimes committed by Cain, he limited the punishment coming to him."⁵

Taken together, these passages and their interpretations lead us to the following conclusions:-

1. Sin repeated over time multiplies guilt, because the later sinners have the example of the earlier sinners, and their unbearable punishment, to warn them and deter them.
2. In such cases, the guilt and the punishment become not only unbearable but unlimited and unending ("seventy times seven").
3. However, if we confess our sins, then He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (I John 1.9). For just as His wrath is unbearable and unending, so is His mercy infinite: "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 6.20).

The original sin, of Adam, drove man out of Paradise, not primarily because he sinned, but because *he failed to confess his sin* before God when God questioned him. The sin of a moment now became the sin of a week – or rather, of a whole lifetime, and of the lifetime of the whole of humanity, which inherits this sin by physical transmission until and unless it is washed out by holy baptism. "For in sins did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 50)... However, Adam at least had the consolation that he could sit opposite Paradise and hear the murmuring of its leaves and see its wonderful light... This was a powerful impetus to repentance, and he did indeed repent.

The second sin, Cain's murder of his brother Abel, was of course more serious, for it was motivated by envy, the passion of the devil himself. And it was made worse because Cain already knew the penalty for sin – expulsion from Paradise. Moreover, like Adam, he tried to hide his sin from God; he refused to repent.

⁴ St. Basil, *Letter* 260.

⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, 20.6-7.

So the punishment meted out to Adam was intensified for Cain – he was sentenced to an increase in physical labour, and expulsion still further from Paradise, in the land of Nod. Moreover, he was separated from the company of the rest of his family, making his suffering unbearable. And God did not allow anyone to shorten his suffering by taking revenge on him and killing him: “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

Cain’s descendant Lamech killed two men instead of one (and had two wives instead of one). This illustrates the iron law of history: the sin that is not repented of unfailingly multiplies, bringing in its wake a multiplication in suffering according to the Justice of God. Lamech repented, and therefore stopped the onslaught of suffering in his own person. But the race of man as a whole – not only the Cainites, but also the Sethites, who mixed with them, contrary to God’s commandments – did not repent of their sins. Between Adam and Noah only one man, Enoch, “walked with God” and was therefore found worthy to be taken out of this vale of tears and even to escape death (temporarily). And so, just as sin multiplied, so was the punishment multiplied, and the Flood came and destroyed the whole of humanity and animal life with the exception of Noah and his sons and those who entered with them into the Ark. And Paradise, which before had been at least visible from the earth, was taken completely away from it...

It follows from what has been said that the deeper our generation descends into sin, the more terrible and all-encompassing we can expect the punishment to be. As the Lord said to the Pharisees: “That on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.” (Matthew 23.35-36).

“He says that upon the Jews then alive shall come all the blood shed unrighteously. For they shall be punished more severely than their fathers because they did not amend their lives after receiving such examples. For Lamech too was punished more than Cain, although he had not killed a brother, because he did not learn from the example of Cain. All blood, He says, from Abel to Zachariah shall come upon you. It was appropriate that He mentioned Abel, for as Abel was slain out of envy, so Christ too was envied...”⁶

And they were punished; in fact, the punishment meted out on apostate Israel was unexampled and unbearable. Nor has it come to an end yet: “His Blood be on us and on our children” (Matthew 27.25), the Jews cried, and it continues to lie on their children unless and until they confess their sin against God.

⁶ *The Explanation of Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1992, pp. 201-202.

But when they do repent, the forgiveness will be complete. “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of Grace and supplication; then they will look on Me Whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem... In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness...” (Zechariah 12.10-11, 13.1).

The law is the same for us who live in the contemporary Babylon. We must confess our sins and come out of her adulterous embrace, just as the Sethites came out of communion with the Cainites, “lest we share in her sins, and receive of her plagues.” For “in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth” (Revelation 18.4, 24).

*February 20 / March 5, 2015.
St. Leo of Catania.*

3. THE TRIUMPH OF PASCHA

“Christ is risen!” We may have heard those words thousands of times, but at the end of each Great Lent and Holy Week they always elicit a special thrill in the heart of the Orthodox believer. The present writer particularly remembers one Paschal night in a True Orthodox church in Bulgaria, when a fellow Christian whom he had never seen before or since said to him with a husky voice and radiant eyes: “He’s done it! He’s done it!” It was impossible not to be infected with his Divine enthusiasm...

But what precisely has Christ done? Sometimes the mind lags behind the heart at Pascha. We rejoice, but do we really know what we are rejoicing about? He has “trampled down death by death”. True, but what death, and how? After all, we still die, and death is all around us. Indeed, in our terrible times it sometimes seems as if the Paschal light has been quenched by an all-encompassing darkness. It seems as if we have gone back to the dark days before Pascha when the Lord said: “This is your hour, and the hour of darkness” (Luke 22.53).

But no, time does not go backwards, and the triumph of Pascha is an eternal triumph. All the victories of sin and darkness since then have been ephemeral, in a sense illusory. For since Christ has risen from the dead we know with an unshakeable certainty that He is in complete control of everything; as He says, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28.18). And below the earth, too: since Christ descended into hell satan and his minions have no power over us unless we freely choose to place his chains over us again. Sin and death and hell may still appear to have a certain freedom and power to this day; but we know that theirs is like the freedom of a prisoner on death row; death has been condemned to death, and in the end will be swallowed up by life...

*

But how? In order to answer this question, it is very useful to consider the counterfactual: what if Christ had not risen from the dead? St. Paul poses this question, and answers it in a very startling and categorical manner: “If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty... If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” (I Corinthians 15.14, 17-19).

Bishop Theophan the Recluse comments on this passage: “If Christ is not risen, some terrible consequences ensue. First, if Christ, having died, is not risen, then sin has not been destroyed, and death has not been conquered, and the curse has not been destroyed: we have lost everything, all is lost, and you have not only preached empty dreams in vain, but you have also vainly

believed in these dreams. (St. John Chrysostom). If Christ is not risen, then there is no redemption. You believed in Christ in the hope of receiving the remission of sins and strength to counter sin and destroy it in yourselves through a new life. But on what is this hope founded? On the fact that Christ, having died on the cross, has offered a redemptive sacrifice for our sins: *Behold the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world* (John 1.29). But the fact that this sacrifice has been accepted is confirmed by the resurrection of Him Who died for our sins. But if He is not risen, the sacrifice has not been accepted and sin remains unredeemed. On the other hand, deliverance from sins has two aspects - the remission of sins and the seed of new life in the destruction of sin. The first is given through communing in the death of Christ, and the second - in communing in His Resurrection. But if Christ is not risen, then there is no communion in His Resurrection, and no seed of new life in us. Therefore sin as before has control over us, and we are still in our sins. That is why the Apostle says that if Christ is not risen, vain is your faith and you are still in your sins."⁷

Let us especially note the words: "the fact that this sacrifice has been accepted is confirmed by the resurrection of Him Who died for our sins".

In the Old Testament the fact that a sacrifice was accepted by God was indicated by a clear sign: *fire*. Thus the Theodotion text of Genesis says that "the Lord kindled a fire over Abel and his sacrifice, but did not kindle a fire over Cain and his sacrifice". For "Abel offered a greater sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying over his gifts" (Hebrews 11.4)." Again, God "testified over the gifts" of Elijah when he made a sacrifice to God in front of the priests of Baal. For He descended in fire upon his sacrifice, but no fire descended on the sacrifice of the pagan priests...

It is no different in the New Testament, although the fire here is invisible. When a truly Orthodox priest serves the Divine Liturgy, the Divine Fire of the Holy Spirit descends and transforms the bread and the wine into the Blood and Body of Christ. This does not happen on the altars of the heretics...

⁷ "Если же Христос не воскрес, то отсюда выходят страшные заключения. Первое - то, что если Христос, умерши, не воскрес, то и грех не истреблен, и смерть не побеждена, и клятва не разрушена: мы все потеряли, все погибло, и не Вы только тщетно проповедовали пустые мечты, но и Вы тщетно уверовали в эти мечты (Св. Злат.). Если Христос не воскрес, то нет и искупления. Вы уверовали во Христа в надежде получить отпущение грехов и принять силы на противодействие греху и истребление его в себе новою жизнью. На чем же основывается эта надежда? На том, что Христос, умерши на кресте, принес за грехи наши искупительную жертву: *се агнец Божий, возьми грехи мира* (Ин. 1.29). А что жертва принята, это подтверждается воскресением Умершего за грехи. Если же Он не воскрес, жертва не принята, грех остался неискупленным. С другой стороны, избавление от грехов имеет две стороны - отпущение грехов и семя новой жизни в истреблении греха. Первое подается приобщением смерти Христа, а второе - приобщением Воскресения Его. Если же Христос не воскрес, то нет и общения Воскресения Его, нет и семени в нас новой жизни, стало быть, грех по-прежнему нами обладает, и мы еще в грехах. Поэтому Апостол и говорит, что если Христос не воскрес, то тщетна вера Ваша и Вы еще во грехах Ваших." (Svt. Feofan Zatvornik, *Tolkovanie Poslanij sv. Apostola Pavla*, Moskva, 2002 g., сс. 205, 206).

But the Sacrifice of the Divine Liturgy is the same as the Sacrifice of Christ on Golgotha; as St. John Chrysostom says, the Blood that flowed from the side of Christ on Golgotha is the same Blood that we drink from the Chalice in the Eucharist. And the fact that the Sacrifice of Christ was accepted by God the Father is testified by the fact that at midnight on Pascha the Holy Fire of Christ's Divinity shone out from His Body like a lightning flash. As the troparion for Holy Saturday chants: "When Thou didst descend unto death, O Life Immortal, then didst Thou slay hades with the lightning of Thy Divinity."

We commemorate this event when we walk around the church in darkness but then enter it in a blaze of light. The light symbolizes the Light of Christ's Divinity testifying to the acceptance of the Sacrifice of His Humanity by the whole of the Holy Trinity. This is the greatest event in human history, and there is no greater joy than knowing it. For it means that God has accepted the Sacrifice of His Son, and our sins are forgiven. "He's done it! He's done it!" Christ is risen!

Week of the Holy Cross, 2015.

4. R III P

Monarchism simply refuses to die. That must be the main conclusion we draw from the extraordinary pomp and circumstance surrounding the reburial of the bones of the notorious English King Richard III in the last few days. It was a great success, and yet many commentators thought the whole thing preposterous. "Surely I can't be the only person to think the world [more exactly: England] had gone stark staring bonkers," as the "grotesque" spectacle of the cortège making its way to Leicester Cathedral for Richard's reburial was screened on national TV, said Michael Thornton in *The Daily Mail*. Crowds ten deep lined the streets to welcome this "evil, detestable tyrant", and threw white Yorkshire roses at the coffin. In his "preposterous" eulogy, Cardinal Vincent Nichols described Richard as a legal reformer and "a man of prayer, a man of anxious devotion". Does the cardinal know nothing about his bloody reign? He usurped his 12-year-old nephew Edward V's throne, and almost certainly ordered the killing of his brother, the Princes in the Tower. Among others, he had Lord Hastings, Earl Rivers, Lord Grey and Sir Thomas Vaughan beheaded without trial. Where was his interest in legal reform then?"⁸

And yet, as one of those attending the ceremonies said, "It's not often you see the burial of a king" ...

Although it goes completely counter to the whole democratic ethos of our civilization, we simply cannot exorcise the ghost of monarchism. The burial of a king, even a very bad king who died over five hundred years ago, is something that thrills even our cynical, hard-bitten hearts. No democratically elected leader (with the possible exception of Churchill) has ever elicited the same kind of emotion as our kings. The famous words of Queen Elizabeth I still work their magic: "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of *a king*, and of a king of England too..." Even the relatives of kings are somehow tinged with their charisma: hence the hysteria (there is no other word for it) surrounding the death of Princess Diana in 1997...

The mysterious fact is that kingship retains a sacramental mystique even in our most godless age. Our sovereigns are no longer Orthodox, and no longer anointed with the true anointing, and do not even really rule the country they reign over. And yet even Hollywood royalty curtseys to the Queen! Today, in accordance with the ideology of democracy, hereditary privilege is despised, "authoritarianism" and "hierarchy" are dirty words, and the source of all legitimacy is seen to come from below, not above. And yet the English love their kings... And while we often see that no abuse is too vile for our democratically elected leaders, we do not tolerate any such thing in relation to the Queen: "She has never put a foot wrong" is a commonly expressed opinion... It is as if the English people subconsciously feel that in becoming democrats they have lost something vitally important, and cling to the holy

⁸ "The Return of a King", *The Week*, 28 March, 2015, p. 6.

corpse of monarchy with despairing tenacity, refusing to believe that the soul has finally departed.

Nor are the English the only ones. The Russians, too, appear to have an inordinate fondness for Tsar Ivan the Terrible. However, you can at least make a case for Ivan: he convened Councils, defeated the Tatars and did many good things before he went mad... But Richard III!... It appears that monarchism must be something deeply rooted in the human psyche which we attempt to destroy at our peril...

*

In searching for an answer to this mystery, let us begin with the writings of two Anglican democrats...

C.S. Lewis wrote that the monarchy was "the channel through which all the vital elements of citizenship - loyalty, the consecration of secular life, the hierarchical principle, splendour, ceremony, continuity - still trickle down to irrigate the dustbowl of modern economic Statecraft".⁹

Again, Roger Scruton has spoken of the English monarchy as "the light above politics, which shines down on the human bustle from a calmer and more exalted sphere. Not being elected by popular vote, the monarch cannot be understood as representing the views only of the present generation. He or she is born into the position, and also passes it on to a legally defined successor. The monarch is in a real sense the voice of history, and the very accidental [*sic*] way in which the office is acquired emphasises the grounds of the monarch's legitimacy, in the history of a place and a culture. This is not to say that kings and queens cannot be mad, irrational, self-interested or unwise. It is to say, rather, that they owe their authority and their influence precisely to the fact that they speak for something other than the present desires of present voters, something vital to the continuity and community which the act of voting assumes. Hence, if they are heard at all, they are heard as limiting the democratic process, in just the way that it must be limited if it is to issue in reasonable legislation. It was in such a way that the English conceived their Queen, in the sunset days of Queen Victoria. The sovereign was an ordinary person, transfigured by a peculiar enchantment which represented not political power but the mysterious authority of an ancient 'law of the land'. When the monarch betrays that law - as, in the opinion of many, the Stuarts betrayed it - a great social and spiritual unrest seizes the common conscience, unrest of a kind that could never attend the misdemeanours of an elected president, or even the betrayal of trust by a political party."¹⁰

All this is true, but the question remains: why can an elected president not receive the same veneration as a hereditary monarch?

⁹ Lewis, "Myth became Fact", *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology*, London: Fount, 1979, p. 64.

¹⁰ Scruton, *England: An Elegy*, London: Chatto & Windus, 2000, p. 188.

The deeper explanation of the mystique of monarchism lies in the creation of man in the image of God. The idea is simple: when man is defined in Genesis as being in the image of God, he is told to have dominion over the whole earth and everything in it. In other words, he is to be a *king* in the image of God's Kingship. And if man as a species is king of the earth, every father is king of his family, and every political leader is king of his tribe or nation. Hereditary kingship and hierarchy are part of the nature of things, reflecting the nature of God in His relationship with created nature...

The idea that kingship is in the image of God was current from the early fourth century (we find it in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*). It was also current at the time of the English revolution. Within a week of the execution of King Charles I in 1649, *Eikon Basilike* ("The Royal Icon") was published by the royalists, being supposedly the work of Charles himself. This enormously popular defence of the monarchy was countered by the revolutionaries with the argument that if the king was an icon or likeness of God, it was right to kill him because icon-veneration is idolatry. "Every King is an image of God," wrote N.O. Brown. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Revolutionary republicanism seeks to abolish effigy and show."¹¹

The poet John Milton also came out against *Eikon Basilike* with his *Eikonklastes*, in which the destruction of the icon of the king was seen as the logical consequence of the earlier iconoclasm of the English Reformation. For, as Christopher Hill explains: "An ikon was an image. Images of saints and martyrs had been cleared out of English churches at the Reformation, on the ground that the common people had worshipped them. Protestantism, and especially Calvinism, was austere monotheistic, and encouraged lay believers to reject any form of idolatry. This 'desacralisation of the universe' in the long run was its main contribution to the rise of modern science."¹²

The best known defence of the Divine Right of Kings was Sir Robert Filmer's Patriarchia or *The Natural Power of Kings*, which was written under Cromwell and published in 1680, during the reign of Charles II. His thinking was based on the idea that Adam was the first father and king of the whole human race. "He believed," writes J.R. Western, "that God had given the sovereignty of the world to Adam and that it had passed by hereditary descent, through the sons of Noah and the heads of the nations into which mankind was divided at the Confusion of Tongues, to all the modern rulers of the world. Adam was the father of all mankind and so all other men were bound to obey him: this plenary power has passed to his successors."¹³

¹¹ Brown, *Love's Body*, New York, 1966, p. 114; quoted in Hill, "Social and Economic Consequences of the Henrician Revolution", in *Puritanism and Revolution*, London: Penguin books, 1958, p. 171.

¹² Hill, op. cit., pp. 173-174.

¹³ J.R. Western, *Monarchy and Revolution*, London: Blandford Press, 1972, p. 8.

The problem with this view, according to John Locke in his *First Treatise of Civil Government* (1681), as interpreted by Ian McClelland, is that “the book of Genesis does not actually say that God gave the world to Adam to rule; Adam is never referred to as king.” However, this is not a powerful objection, because, even if the word “king” is not used, God does say to Adam that he is to have “dominion over... every living thing that moves upon the earth”. But “Locke then goes on to say: suppose we concede, for which there is no biblical evidence, that Adam really was king by God’s appointment. That still leaves the awkward fact that Genesis makes no mention of the kingly rights of the sons of Adam; there is simply no reference to the right of hereditary succession. Locke then goes on to say: suppose we concede both Adam’s title to kingship and the title of the sons of Adam, for neither of which there is biblical evidence, how does that help kings now to establish their titles by Divine Right? Despite the biblical concern with genealogy, the line of Adam’s posterity has become hopelessly scrambled. How can any king at the present time seriously claim that he is in the line of direct descent from Adam?... Because the genealogy since Adam is scrambled, it is perfectly possible that all the present kings are usurpers, or all the kings except one. Perhaps somewhere the real, direct descendant of Adam is alive and living in obscurity, cheated of his birthright to universal monarchy by those pretending to call themselves kings in the present world.”¹⁴

However, shorn of its dependence on the idea of Adam as the first king, Filmer’s teaching that kingship, like fatherhood, is natural and therefore Divine in origin, is not so easily refuted. “That which is natural to man exists by Divine right,” he writes. “Kingship is natural to man. Therefore kingship exists by Divine right.”

Another important idea of Filmer’s that went directly against the liberal tradition that was just coming into being was that man is *not* born free. The people “are not born free by nature” and “there never was any such thing as an independent multitude, who at first had a natural right to a community [of goods]”. As Harold Nicolson writes: “‘This conceit of original freedom’, as he said, was ‘the only ground’ on which thinkers from ‘the heathen philosophers’ down to Hobbes had built the idea that governments were created by the deliberate choice of free men. He [Filmer] believed on the contrary, as an early opponent put it, that ‘the rise and right of government’ was natural and native, not voluntary and conventional’. Subjects therefore could not have a right to overturn a government because the original bargain had not been kept. There were absurdities and dangers in the opposing view. ‘Was a general meeting of a whole kingdom ever known for the election of a Prince? Was there any example of it ever found in the world?’ Some sort of majority decision, or the assumption that a few men are allowed to decide for the rest, are in fact the only ways in which government by the people can be supposed to have been

¹⁴ McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 232. Rousseau also pointed out, in *The Social Contract*, that since every man is equally a descendant of Adam, it was not clear which descendants of Adam were to exercise lordship over others.

either initiated or carried on. But both are as inconsistent as monarchy with the idea that men are naturally free. 'If it be true that men are by nature free-born and not to be governed without their own consents and that self-preservation is to be regarded in the first place, it is not lawful for any government but self-government to be in the world... To pretend that a major part, or the silent consent of any part, may be interpreted to bind the whole people, is both unreasonable and unnatural; it is against all reason for men to bind others, where it is against nature for men to bind themselves. Men that boast so much of natural freedom are not willing to consider how contradictory and destructive the power of a major part is to the natural liberty of the whole people.' The claims of representative assemblies to embody the will of the people are attacked on these lines, in a manner recalling Rousseau. Filmer also points out that large assemblies cannot really do business and so assemblies delegate power to a few of their number: 'hereby it comes to pass that public debates which are imagined to be referred to a general assembly of a kingdom, are contracted into a particular or private assembly'. In short 'Those governments that seem to be popular are kinds of petty monarchies' and 'It is a false and improper speech to say that a whole multitude, senate, council, or any multitude whatsoever doth govern where the major part only rules; because many of the multitude that are so assembled... are governed against and contrary to their wills.'"¹⁵

And so government by the "multimutinous will" of the people (Ivan the Terrible's phrase) is a contradiction in terms. Always and everywhere there is a small group who really makes the decisions – and usually there is one person in or behind this group whose voice is decisive. Thus the most democratically convened of assemblies turns out to be a "petty monarchy" ...

And is this not the reason why we so often despise them? For is there not something despicable in a man or party claiming to represent the will of the people when we know that he actually represents only himself or some narrow vested interest, and is only pretending to represent the people in order to get their vote? Ambition is despicable, and no man ever came to power in a democracy without being ambitious. A hereditary monarch, on the other hand, does not have to pretend to be what he is not – he is what he is by virtue of his birth, which we may ascribe to the will of God or chance depending on our faith or lack of it, but which in any case gives him a certain right – the right that comes from being born "in the purple" ...

Of course, tyrants and usurpers are also ambitious. But theirs is a *naked* ambition, and human nature is such that it respects *naked* ambition more than the veiled variety; it involves less lying... And if he really acts like a king rather than a servile man-pleaser, all the better – at any rate he is a real *man*...

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¹⁵ Nicolson, Nicolson, *Monarchy*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962, pp. 9-10.

But why a *hereditary* monarchy? Why not simply elect the best man and then give him the power of a monarch – as happened once in the time of the Judges (11.11)? Why leave such an important matter to chance?

We have already examined one answer to this question: because the ruler is the father of the nation as God is the father of the universe, and hereditary succession from father to son expresses this truth. It was in Russia that this was particularly strongly felt. As Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov writes, “In blessed Russia, according to the spirit of the pious people, the Tsar and the fatherland constitute one whole, as in a family the parents and their children constitute one whole.”¹⁶

In any case, from an Orthodox point of view there is no such thing as chance. For, as Bishop Ignaty writes: “There is no blind chance! God rules the world, and everything that takes place in heaven and beneath the heavens takes place according to the judgement of the All-wise and All-powerful God.”¹⁷ And so, even if the birth of a hereditary king looks like chance from a human point of view, from the Divine point of view it is *election*, God’s election of that man, and no other, to the throne of his fathers...

Ivan Solonevich writes: “The human individual, born by chance as heir to the throne, is placed in circumstances which guarantee him the best possible professional preparation from a technical point of view. His Majesty Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich was probably one of the most educated people of his time. The best professors of Russia taught him both law and strategy and history and literature. He spoke with complete freedom in three foreign languages. His knowledge was not one-sided... and was, if one can so express it, living knowledge...

“The Russian tsar was in charge of everything and was obliged to know everything - it goes without saying, as far as humanly possible. He was a ‘specialist’ in that sphere which excludes all specialization. This was a specialism standing above all the specialisms of the world and embracing them all. That is, the general volume of erudition of the Russian monarch had in mind that which every philosophy has in mind: the concentration in one point of the whole sum of human knowledge. However, with this colossal qualification, that ‘the sum of knowledge’ of the Russian tsars grew in a seamless manner from the living practice of the past and was checked against the living practice of the present. True, that is how almost all philosophy is checked – for example, with Robespierre, Lenin and Hitler – but, fortunately for humanity, such checking takes place comparatively rarely....

“The heir to the Throne, later the possessor of the Throne, is placed in such conditions under which temptations are reduced... to a minimum. He is given

¹⁶ Brianchaninov, *Pis'ma* (Letters), Moscow, 2000, p. 781.

¹⁷ Brianchaninov, “Sud’by Bozhii” (The Judgements of God), *Polnoe Sobranie Tvorenij* (Complete Collection of Works), volume II, Moscow, 2001, p. 72.

everything he needs beforehand. At his birth he receives an order, which he, of course, did not manage to earn, and the temptation of vainglory is liquidated in embryo. He is absolutely provided for materially – the temptation of avarice is liquidated in embryo. He is the only one having the Right – and so competition falls away, together with everything linked with it. Everything is organised in such a way that the personal destiny of the individual should be welded together into one whole with the destiny of the nation. Everything that a person would want to have for himself is already given him. And the person automatically merges with the general good.

“One could say that all this is possessed also by a dictator of the type of Napoleon, Stalin or Hitler. But this would be less than half true: everything that the dictator has he conquered, and all this he must constantly defend – both against competitors and against the nation. The dictator is forced to prove every day that it is precisely he who is the most brilliant, great, greatest and inimitable, for if not he, but someone else, is not the most brilliant, then it is obvious that that other person has the right to power...

“We can, of course, quarrel over the very principle of ‘chance’. A banally rationalist, pitifully scientific point of view is usually formulated thus: the chance of birth may produce a defective man. But we, we will elect the best... Of course, ‘the chance of birth’ can produce a defective man. We have examples of this: Tsar Theodore Ivanovich. Nothing terrible happened. For the monarchy ‘is not the arbitrariness of a single man’, but ‘a system of institutions’, - a system can operate temporarily even without a ‘man’. But simple statistics show that the chances of such ‘chance’ events occurring are very small. And the chance of ‘a genius on the throne’ appearing is still smaller.

“I proceed from the axiom that a genius in politics is worse than the plague. For a genius is a person who thinks up something that is new in principle. In thinking up something that is new in principle, he invades the organic life of the country and cripples it, as it was crippled by Napoleon, Stalin and Hitler...

“The power of the tsar is the power of the average, averagely clever man over two hundred million average, averagely clever people... V. Klyuchevsky said with some perplexity that the first Muscovite princes, the first gatherers of the Russian land, were completely average people: - and yet, look, they gathered the Russian land. This is quite simple: average people have acted in the interests of average people and the line of the nation has coincided with the line of power. So the average people of the Novgorodian army went over to the side of the average people of Moscow, while the average people of the USSR are running away in all directions from the genius of Stalin.”¹⁸

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow thus expressed the superiority of the hereditary over the elective principle: “What conflict does election for public posts produce in other peoples! With what conflict, and sometimes also with

¹⁸ Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, pp. 87-88, 89-90, 91-92.

what alarm do they attain the legalisation of the right of public election! Then there begins the struggle, sometimes dying down and sometimes rising up again, sometimes for the extension and sometimes for the restriction of this right. The incorrect extension of the right of social election is followed by its incorrect use. It would be difficult to believe it if we did not read in foreign newspapers that elective votes are sold; that sympathy or lack of sympathy for those seeking election is expressed not only by votes for and votes against, but also by sticks and stones, as if a man can be born from a beast, and rational business out of the fury of the passions; that ignorant people make the choice between those in whom wisdom of state is envisaged, lawless people participate in the election of future lawgivers, peasants and craftsmen discuss and vote, not about who could best keep order in the village or the society of craftsmen, but about who is capable of administering the State.

“Thanks be to God! It is not so in our fatherland. Autocratic power, established on the age-old law of heredity, which once, at a time of impoverished heredity, was renewed and strengthened on its former basis by a pure and rational election, stands in inviolable firmness and acts with calm majesty. Its subjects do not think of striving for the right of election to public posts in the assurance that the authorities care for the common good and know through whom and how to construct it.”¹⁹

“God, in accordance with the image of His heavenly single rule, has established a tsar on earth; in accordance with the image of His almighty power, He has established an autocratic tsar; in accordance with the image of His everlasting Kingdom, which continues from age to age, He has established a hereditary tsar.”²⁰

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So now we know why even a bad king like Richard III elicits deep emotions even in a democratic people. It is partly because the hereditary king is felt to have a certain right by being born into his position, which right has been strengthened by the sacrament of royal anointing. For, as Shakespeare put it in Richard II (III, ii, 54-7):

*Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.*

And in Hamlet (IV, v, 123-4):

There's such a divinity doth hedge a king

¹⁹ Metropolitan Philaret, *Sochinenia* (Works), 1861, vol. 3, pp. 322-323; *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 49, N 9 (573), September, 1997, p. 9.

²⁰ Metropolitan Philaret, *Sochinenia* (Works), 1877, vol. 3, p. 442; *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 49, N 9 (573), September, 1997, p. 5.

That treason can but peep to what it would...

But it goes still deeper than that. Man is born to rule and have dominion in the image of God's Dominion. And just as a man wishes to be the master in his own family, so he wishes that the larger family of his nation should have its master and father, and not be the prey of every fair-sounding adventurer and charlatan that puts himself up for election. For in his heart of hearts, he wants *God*, not man, to elect for him a ruler, knowing that God will choose what is best for him, even if that is not pleasant and not what he would have chosen for himself. He may feel this subconsciously even if with his conscious mind he is an out-and-out democrat, who regards himself as free and equal to any man on earth, and so can call his rulers to account at any time...

The problem is: how does a nation return from choosing its own rulers to letting God decide its rulers for it? There is no easy answer to that question. But a good beginning would be to repent of our self-will, of our rebellion from the true King of kings, remembering the words of the Prophet Hosea: "We have no king, because we feared not the Lord" (Hosea 10.3).

March 15/28, 2015.

Holy Apostle Aristobulus, First Bishop of Britain.

5. PRAYER AND THE WILL OF GOD

*Do not think that you have a right to complain when your prayers are not answered.
God fulfills your desires in a manner that you do not know.
St. Nektarios of Aegina.*

In one of his essays, the famous Anglican theologian C.S. Lewis presented a problem of the spiritual life to which he did not know the answer, in spite of having asked every authoritative Christian he knew about it.²¹ However, as far as is known, he did not ask the Orthodox Church. Let us see how the saints of the Orthodox Church might have answered him in his quandary...

Lewis' problem is simply put. On the one hand, the Lord teaches us to pray "Thy will be done", and to recognize that not all our petitions may be in accordance with the will of God and therefore may not be fulfilled by Him - for our own good. On the other hand, He exhorts us to pray without doubting in the slightest that our prayer will be answered - it is this kind of prayer that is always answered, that can even move mountains (Matthew, 21.21; Mark 11.23)... The problem is that these two commandments seem to be incompatible: if we must always pray with the condition: "so long as this is in accordance with Thy will" - which is exactly how the Lord Himself prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane ("Nevertheless, not My Will, but Thine be done" (Matthew 26.39)), - then it would appear to be impossible to pray with that absolute certainty in the fulfillment of our petition that is exhorted by the Lord and His apostles. For as the Apostle James says: "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord" (1.6-8).

Let us first establish what faith is. According to the Apostle Paul in Hebrews, it is *certainty*: "the substance of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen" (11.1). In other words, through faith we *know* that certain unseen things are true, not as a matter of hypothesis, which is always uncertain, but as *undoubted fact* for which we have *proof*. Such is the Christian faith in the Resurrection; for "He presented Himself alive after His suffering by many *infallible proofs*" (Acts 1.3). But such certainty of faith extends beyond the present and the past into the future, into the realm of Christian hope. Thus we say in the Creed: "I believe... in the resurrection from the dead and the life of the age to come", not as something that may or may not be true, but as *undoubted fact*.

Let us now turn to another definition of faith, that of St. Symeon the New Theologian: "Faith is (readiness) to die for Christ's sake, for His commandments, in the conviction that such death brings life." According to this definition, only the man who is prepared for martyrdom has faith. Clearly, we are talking here about something that is not all or nothing, but has degrees. For some are more prepared

²¹ Lewis, "Petitionary Prayer: A Problem Without an Answer", in *Faith, Christianity and the Church*, London: HarperCollins, 2000, pp. 197-205.

to die for Christ than others, and the same man may think he is prepared at one point, and sincerely declares that he is, but in fact is not. Take the Apostle Thomas. Before the resurrection, he declared that he was ready to die for Christ, and there is no reason to doubt his sincerity. But his faith failed him during the Crucifixion, and he recovered it only later, on the eighth day after the Resurrection. Thereafter, however, he appears to have had a rock-solid faith and suffered martyrdom for Christ on the mission-field in India.

The idea that faith can have degrees, can vary in strength between individuals and over time in the same individual, is clearly supported by the Gospel. The apostles had faith in Christ sufficient to work miracles in His name, but at a certain point they failed to cast out the demon from an epileptic boy, for which the Lord condemned the people as a “faithless and perverse generation”, told them that if only they had faith like a mustard seed they could move mountains, and said that “this kind [of demon] does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17.21). In other words, their faith, though real, was not strong enough to have their petition fulfilled in this case, and they needed to live a more ascetic life in order to raise their faith to the level required. At the same time, there are many cases recorded in the Gospels when the Lord healed people whose faith was weak or almost non-existent, or for the sake, nor of their faith, but of the faith of their friends. So petitions can be answered by God in His great mercy at any time and in answer to the petition of almost any person; but the faith to move mountains requires a degree and strength of faith that is only acquired through good works, the fulfillment of all the commandments of Christ.

So our definition of faith must be modified. Faith is not only certainty, but *certainty that is stable and deep*, not the whim of a single moment. And this certainty is acquired only through ascetic struggle, as the fruit of a whole life devoted to the fulfillment of Christ’s commandments. This wider definition gives us a clue to the solution of our problem. For it is precisely the man whose faith is stable and deep who will know better than those weak in faith what the will of God is in any particular situation, and will limit his petitions to those that conform with the will of God.

Let us take three distinct cases.

First there is the case of the man who is far from God, whose faith is weak and who prays to God rarely, or only when he is in trouble or when he wants something unlawful. Of such men the Apostle James says: “You do not have because you do not ask. [Or] you ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (4.2-3).

Secondly, there is the man who is stronger in faith, but whose faith, like his life in general, is not yet perfect. As a result of this weakness and imperfection, he cannot be sure that all his petitions are in accordance with the will of God, and so he cannot be certain that they will all be fulfilled. So he is quite right to qualify his requests with the phrase: “If this is Thy will”. Indeed, who among us ordinary Christians can be certain, when he prays, for example, for recovery from an illness,

that it is God's will that he recovers? As experience shows, sometimes we recover, and sometimes we do not; if we recover, it was God's will, if we do not it was also God's will...

This is not to say that we should not pray unless we are absolutely certain that our petition will be fulfilled. In the Lord's prayer, just after the petition "Thy will be done", we have the petition "Give us this day our daily bread." So we are encouraged to petition God for our daily needs, with as much faith and striving of spirit and soul and body as we can muster – but only after we have prayed to submit ourselves in any case to God's will. Faith grows through practice, and the heartfelt, compunctionate quality of the prayer of faith increases with our application to it; for we will never increase in faith if we do not apply such faith as we have to the needs and challenges of our daily lives. The more we pray – and not only for our daily needs, but also for an increase in faith and other virtues – the more our faith will imperceptibly increase, and the clearer we will see what is the will of God in any particular situation.

Nor should we give up if we do not receive what we ask for. St. Ephraim the Syrian writes: "The Lord is an omniscient giver of gifts. He considers what would benefit the supplicant; and when the Lord sees that a man is asking for something harmful or even merely useless, the Lord does not answer his prayer and refuses him that which he thought good. The Lord hears every prayer, and he whose prayer is not answered receives from the Lord the same saving gift as he whose prayer is answered. If two people approach the Good One, one in need and the other with a debt to pay, He will give to the one and forgive the other. Thus both walk away from the Giver's door with gifts: the one in need receives delivery from necessity, and the debtor receives forgiveness of his debt. In every possible way God shows that He is a merciful Giver of gifts: He bestows upon us His love and shows us His kindness. And this is why He will not answer even one inappropriate prayer if its fulfillment would bring us death and ruin."²²

Now let us turn to the third case, the case of the saint who is perfect, or near-perfect in faith. He knows what is the will of God in any particular case, and therefore he will never pray for what he knows is not the will of God. Conversely, when he prays he knows that his petition will be answered because he knows already that it is the will of God.

As St. John Chrysostom writes, commenting on Romans 8.27: "St. Paul is here describing the spiritual man who has the gift of prayer. He does not inform God as if God were ignorant but intercedes so that we may learn what it is that we should pray for and to ask God to give us things which are pleasing to Him... These prayers are heard, because the man who prays them is doing so 'according to the will of God'."²³

²² Saint Ephraim The Syrian, *A Spiritual Psalter or Reflections on God*.

²³ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 14 on Romans*.

As an example, let us take the life of St. Seraphim of Sarov. Late in life, after many years spent in reclusion in very strict asceticism, he was commanded by the Mother of God to come out of reclusion and serve the people. Then there began the huge flood of healings, teachings and prophecies for which he has become so renowned. But did he carry out the petitions of all those who came to him? By no means! Thus he said of the very first person who came to him for healing, that she would be the first person whom he would heal - and she was healed. But of another woman who asked that he pray that she become a nun - surely a godly petition! - he said: "No, it is God's will that you get married {to such and such a person}" - which she did. And to another woman who came at the same time and asked for his prayers that she marry, he said: "No, it is God's will that you become a nun" - which she did.

Thus St. Seraphim knew the will of God because he had faith, and because he had faith and always asked for what he knew to be the will of God, his petitions were always answered...

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However, an objection to this account may be put forward from the practice of the Lord Himself: during His agonized prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane He petitioned the Father that this "cup" - that is, the cup of His sufferings and death on Golgotha - should "pass". Nevertheless, He said, "not My will but Thine be done" (Matthew 26.39). Now the question arises: surely the Lord knew that His cup would not pass, that He was destined to die on the Cross for the salvation of mankind. So why did He pray for what He knew was *not* God's will - even if He later prayed that God's will be done nevertheless? Is this not an example of precisely the "double-minded" prayer that the Apostle James condemns?

This objection fails because it fails to take into account the full motivation behind the Lord's petition, and the full meaning of the petition as regards the "cup" He was about to drink. This is explained to us by Blessed Theophylact of Bulgaria's comments on the prayer in the Garden as follows: "He was sorrowful and heavy in accord with the divine plan, so as to confirm that He was truly man. For it is human nature to fear death; it was against our nature that death entered, and for this reason our nature flees from it. At the same time, Christ was sorrowful so that the devil would unknowingly leap upon Him, the God-man, and bear Him down to death as though He were mere man, and thus the devil himself would be crushed. Moreover, if the Lord had rushed towards death it would have given the Jews the excuse that they did not sin in killing one who was so eager to suffer. From this we learn not throw ourselves into trials and temptations, but to pray that we may be delivered from them. For this reason, too, He did not move away a great distance, but was near the three disciples, that they might hear Him and remember when they themselves fell into temptations, and pray in the same manner. He calls this Passion a cup [as of wine], either because of the sleep which it brought, or because it became the cause of gladness and salvation for us. He wants the cup to be removed either to show that as a man subject to nature He pleads to escape death, as was said above, or because He did not wish the Jews to

commit a sin so grave that on account of it the temple would be destroyed and the people perish. Yet He desires that His Father's will be done, that we also may learn that it is precisely when our nature draws us away from obedience that we must obey God and fulfill His will."²⁴

This God-inspired commentary is remarkable for its depth and concision. The saint reveals to us that the Lord's motivation in His famous prayer was threefold: (i) to reveal that it is natural and not sinful for men to fear death, and therefore that it is not sinful to pray for deliverance from it; (ii) to deceive the devil into thinking that the Lord was a mere man; and (iii) to show that He was praying also that the Jews should not "commit a sin so grave that on account of it the temple would be destroyed and the people perish".

It is the third motivation that is the most relevant to our theme. This demonstrates that an event may be willed by God at one level and not willed by Him at another, so that we may at the same time pray for it to happen and pray for it to "pass". For the Death of Christ on the Cross was at the same time the most joyful event in the history of mankind, since it made possible the salvation for eternity of the whole race of man, and one of the most tragic in that it signified the falling away from grace of the God-chosen people of the Jews. For if Christ had not died, accomplishing the most perfect Sacrifice to the Justice of God, we would still be in our sins and without hope. But the same blood that saved us condemned the Jews, bringing to pass the curse that they themselves had invoked upon themselves: "His Blood be upon us, and on our children" (Matthew 27.25).

Thus when the Lord prayed that the "cup" should pass, He was not praying that He should not die and thereby accomplish the salvation of mankind. On the contrary, it was for this very purpose that He became man; as He said earlier: "I have a baptism to be baptized with [i.e. death], and how distressed I am till it be accomplished" (Luke 12.50). Rather, He was deeply sorrowful that the salvation of mankind as a whole, both Jews and Gentiles, should be accompanied by the falling away of His own people, the Jews, in their great majority.

In fact, this prayer was not so much a petition as a cry of sorrow (and, as we have seen, of the natural and sinless fear of death). It was not so much a real attempt to avoid death, as an expression of horror at the nature of physical death, on the one hand, and at the spiritual death of the Jewish people, on the other. There was never any question but that God's will would be done, and that Christ in His humanity, while repelled at the cost, would nevertheless pay the cost in full. But the cost was so great that He staggered under the burden, and an angel was sent to help Him in His suffering humanity. In the same way He staggered under the burden of His physical Cross on the way to Calvary, and Simon of Cyrene was sent to help Him in His physical - but not spiritual - weakness.

²⁴ *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1992, pp. 231-232.

And so His prayer could be said to have been “double-minded” in one way, but not in another. It was “double-minded” in the sense that He both wanted it and did not want the fulfillment of His request. But it was not double-minded in the sense that Christ did not pray a perfect prayer, full of the certainty of faith, the boundlessness of love and the unquestioning humility of absolute obedience to its consequences for Himself and others.

We can put the matter in another way. The theologians distinguish between the primary and the secondary will of God. God’s primary will is that all men “come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved”. However, most men of their own free will do not come to the truth: “many are called, but few are chosen”. Therefore it is God’s secondary will that those who have shown themselves unworthy in this way should not be saved. Christ in Gethsemane affirmed His absolute acceptance of and obedience to the primary will of God by providing the perfect Sacrifice for sin. But He expressed horror at the prospect that His Sacrifice should be accompanied by the fulfillment of His secondary will – the abandonment of the Jews. To express such horror is not in itself a sin, a refusal to accept the secondary will of God. It is rather an affirmation of the continuing primacy of the primary will of God over the secondary, an expression of the burning desire that *all* men should be saved, even with the knowledge that *not all* men *will* be saved. We, following Christ, must long for the fulfillment of God’s primary will, while submitting in obedience to His secondary will. Thus while there is still hope – that is, before the Last Judgement – we must hope and pray for the salvation of all men, although we know that this prayer can be answered only in part. Only in the case of certain unrepentant sinners does the Apostle command that we must not pray (I John 5.16). In this way we fulfill the will of God and help towards the salvation of those who can be saved...

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In conclusion:-

1. Undoubting prayer to God is always answered if it is in accordance with His will. Nor does it hinder the power of prayer that we inquire first whether its fulfillment is in accordance with God’s will. Thus a leper came to Christ “and besought Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. Immediately the leprosy left him” (Luke 5.12-13).
2. Since God is good to all, even the evil, He may fulfill the will of men even if their prayers are weak in faith. However, prayer that is full of the certainty of faith, or is prayed “in My name” (John 14.13-14), or, still better, “where two or three are gathered together in My name” (Matthew 18.19-20) – that is, in the community of the Church – are more powerful and certain of fulfillment than when these conditions are lacking. Faith is increased by a life lived in fulfillment of the commandments of God, which also gives a clearer, deeper understanding of the will of God. Therefore such a life increases the likelihood that petitions will be granted – “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5.16).

3. Sometimes even the prayers of righteous men, and of the whole Church, are refused, not because they are lacking in faith or displeasing to God, but because they are not in accord with His secondary will. Thus the Church will rightly and piously pray for peace and the salvation of the world, which is always God's primary will. But the Lord, while accepting her prayer as pious, may refuse to fulfill it on occasion – for example, in 1914 - because the world as whole is not worthy of peace or salvation...

Let us end with Blessed Theophylact on Matthew 21.21-22: "Great is the promise which Christ makes to His disciples, the ability to move mountains, if only we are not ambiguous in faith, that is, we do not hesitate. Whatever we ask, unhesitantly believing in God's power, we shall receive. One might ask, 'And if I ask for something unprofitable, and foolishly believe that God will give me this, will I indeed receive this unprofitable thing? How is it that God is said to love mankind if He would fulfill my unprofitable request?' Listen then. First, when you hear 'faith', you should understand that it means not, 'foolish faith' but 'true faith'; and when you hear 'prayer', understand it to mean that prayer which asks for things profitable, such as the Lord gave to us when He said, 'Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one', and petitions of similar nature. Then consider the words 'doubt not', [literally, 'be ye not divided', *me diakrithete*]. For how could a man who is united with God as one and not divided or separated from Him, how could that man ask for something unprofitable? So if you are undivided and inseparable from God, then you will ask for and receive things which are profitable for you."²⁵

Bright Monday, 2015; revised June 26 / July 9, 2015.

²⁵ *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew*, p. 180.

6. THE PARADOXES OF LITURGICAL LANGUAGE

Tertullian said: "I believe because it is absurd". This was not quite accurate. He should have said: "I believe, although my faith is highly paradoxical, and unbelievers will think it is absurd."

Our faith is indeed full of paradoxes, and the liturgical language of our Divine services does not try to avoid that paradoxicality, but even emphasizes it. Thus we believe that the Creator became a creature, the invisible became visible, the immaterial became material, Eternity entered into time. And far from trying to explain or rationalize these paradoxes, or soften their edges, as it were, our liturgy proclaims them triumphantly, without apology: "Today Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem. Today He Who knows no beginning now begins to be, and the Word is made flesh."²⁶

Again, we believe that all the sins and injustices of the world were wiped out by the greatest sin and injustice in the history of the world, the killing of Christ. Do our Divine services attempt to soften this paradox? By no means! "By the Blood of God the poison of the serpent is washed away; and the curse of a just condemnation is loosed by the unjust punishment inflicted on the Just One."²⁷

Again, we believe that the Fount of all life in heaven on earth, Who is the Life and Light of the universe, died – and thereby raised all the dead to life... Do our Divine services attempt to soften this paradox? By no means! "Come, let us see our Life lying in the tomb, that He may give life to those that in their tombs lie dead."²⁸

Nor is this deliberately – one might almost say: provocatively – paradoxical language confined to the great feasts of the Church that celebrate the deeds of the God-man. Even the services to the saints are full of paradoxes, and of the use of imagery that defies all logic. Thus the blood of the martyrs is often said in the service books to dry up the blood-sacrifices offered to the demons. But how can that which is liquid dry up something else that is liquid? It makes no sense!

Again: "With the blood thou didst shed unjustly, thou didst drown the whole horde of the demons and didst overwhelm the multitude of the ungodly. But thou didst richly give drink to the assembly of the faithful, O Eupychius, adornment of the holy martyrs."²⁹ This is not quite so paradoxical, but teachers of literature would hardly approve of a student who used the image of blood so liberally and extravagantly.

²⁶ *Festal Menaion*, December 25, Mattins, Lauds, "Both now and ever..."

²⁷ *Festal Menaion*, September 14, Great Vespers, "Lord, I have cried", "Both now and ever..."

²⁸ *Triodion*, Holy Saturday, Mattins, Lauds, verse.

²⁹ *Menaion*, April 9, Mattins, Ode 6, troparion.

Similarly: "Them that were engulfed in the brine of evils didst thou draw froth with the hook of thy words, O sacred one [Pancratius], and with the pure rain of prayers thou didst dry up the turgid depths of false belief, O mystagogue of Christ."³⁰

Again: "Those in deception stretched thee forth without pity and bound thee with bonds, who bindeth all falsehood and rendeth asunder the fetters of heresy with the bond of thy divine doctrines, O most sacred hierarch, father Martin."³¹ Here again, the image of bondage is used literally once and metaphorically three times within a single sentence. Such extravagance of imagery hardly conforms with the canons of aesthetic taste...

Again: "The breaking of thy limbs broke asunder the wiles of the foe, and the shedding of thy blood dried up the cruel torrents of ungodliness, O honoured [Tatiana]"³²

Finally, an extravaganza of fire and blood: "Being set aflame with the fire of the love of the Lord God, they fully disdained the fire; and thus being kindled like most divine live coals, through Christ did the august Martyrs wholly burn up the dead wood of error's insolence; they bridled mouths of beasts by wise supplications unto the Lord; and thus, beheaded, they themselves cut off all the hosts of the enemy; and in that they poured forth their blood in streams through their endurance and great patience, they watered all the Church, which then blossomed forth with faith."³³

And yet we, the believers, delight in this extravagance, in this breaking of the bonds of literary decorum and symbolic consistency. For our faith celebrates the breaking of all bonds of nature and logic and aesthetics, and the language of the Divine services reflects this fact. Indeed, it is precisely through the language of the liturgy that we constantly remind ourselves of that fact, otherwise we too could easily slip into a comfortable, sanitized faith in which the element of the miraculous and paradoxical is, if not removed altogether, at any rate relegated to a secondary place. And this would be the death of faith. For we preach "Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness" (I Corinthians 1.23). And the moment our faith is not a stumbling block for the Jews, and seems quite reasonable to the Greeks, we can be sure that we have lost it...

So our faith is not absurd, no. But it is paradoxical; it does unite opposites and reconcile the irreconcilable and confound all laws of nature and logic and aesthetics. It is, and must be, foolish to the wise of this world...

And we glory in this fact. For "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

³⁰ *Menaion*, July 9, Mattins, Ode 7, troparion.

³¹ *Menaion*, April 14, Mattins, Ode 6, troparion.

³² *Menaion*, January 12, Mattins, Ode 8, troparion.

³³ *Pentecostarion*, Sunday of All Saints, Great Vespers, "Lord, I have cried", verse.

For since in the wisdom of God the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe..." (I Corinthians 1.20-21).

April 15/28, 2015.

7. THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The modern philosophy of human rights is a theory of universal morality binding on all men and all human institutions and states that is not dependent on the existence of God or any personal lawgiver.

A man kicks another man who is lying on the ground and is not threatening anyone. Is that right or wrong? No civilized person would deny that it is wrong. The question is: why is it wrong? Is it wrong because God has commanded us to love our neighbour, not abuse him? This is the answer that an Orthodox Christian (and most religious people) would give. Is it wrong because unprovoked violence is a crime according to the laws of the State? Again, an Orthodox Christian (and most law-abiding people) would answer: yes. Is it wrong because every human being has the *right* to be treated with dignity and respect? Here an Orthodox Christian would probably hesitate to answer... Not because he denies that human beings should be treated with dignity and respect, but because the way the question is posed presupposes a philosophy of human rights which is not Orthodox...

1. The Medieval Theory of Natural Law

Let us by looking at the roots of this philosophy. The roots of humanism lie in the medieval western idea of *natural law*. This idea was born out of the need to place limits on two institutions that in different ways were thought to be *above the law*: the Holy Roman Empire, and the Roman papacy.

According to Roman law, the emperor was above the law, or freed from human laws (legibus solutus), insofar as "what pleases the prince has the power of law". For if he broke his own laws, who was to judge him, and who was to prevent him passing other laws to make his previous transgression of the law lawful? The pope was similarly considered to be above the law – that is, freed from the provisions of canon law. This was a consequence of his "absolute power" (potestas absoluta), for if he sinned against canon law, or became a heretic, who was to judge him if not the supreme expert on the subject, the pope himself? And who could judge him if he refused to judge himself?

However, although a monarch might be freed from the laws of the State, and the pope might be freed from the canon law of the Church, they were both theoretically subject to another kind of law. This higher law was called by medieval theorists *natural law*. Natural law is defined by the historian of medieval scholastic philosophy Fr. Frederick Copleston as "the totality of the universal dictates of right reason concerning that good of nature which is to be pursued and that evil of man's nature which is to be shunned."³⁴

³⁴ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, vol. 2, part II, p. 129.

But this definition begs the question: how do we know what is “right reason”? And what is “the good of nature”? The answer given by the medieval theologians, according to J.S. McClelland, was roughly as follows: “For a maxim of morality or a maxim of good government to be part of natural law, it has to be consistent with scripture, with the writings of the Fathers of the Church, with papal pronouncement, with what the philosophers say, and it must also be consistent with the common practices of mankind, both Christian and non-Christian.”³⁵

But this, too, begs several questions. What are we to do if “papal pronouncement” contradicts “the writings of the Fathers of the Church” (as it often does)? And is not “what the philosophers say” likely to be still more at variance with the Holy Fathers? And is not “the common practices of mankind, both Christian and non-Christian” an extremely vague and debatable concept?

It is indeed; which is why, even in its more modern and secularized version, the philosophy of natural law, or human rights, has remained extremely vague and debatable. But this does not prevent it from being, both then and now, a very powerful weapon in the hands of those who, for one reason or another, wish to overturn the prevailing hierarchy or system of morality. We see this even in Thomas Aquinas, the greatest of the scholastics, and a loyal son of the Roman Catholic Church. He defined the relationship of natural law to man-made laws as follows: “Every law framed by man bears the character of a law exactly to that extent to which it is derived from the law of nature. But if on any point it is in conflict with the law of nature, it at once ceases to be a law; it is a mere perversion of the law.”³⁶

The first important application of the principle of natural law came during the Magna Carta crisis in England. Pope Innocent III had placed the whole of England under ban because King John disagreed with him over who should be archbishop of Canterbury. He excommunicated John, deposed him from the throne and suggested to King Philip Augustus of France that he invade and conquer England! John appealed to papal mediation to save him from Philip. He received it, but at a price – full restitution of church funds and lands, perpetual infeudation of England and Ireland to the papacy, and the payment of an annual rent of a thousand marks. Only when all the money had been paid was the ban lifted. And then, as Peter De Rosa puts it acidly: “by kind permission of Pope Innocent III, Christ was able to enter England again”.³⁷

This enraged King Philip, however; for he was now ordered to abandon his preparations for war, and was not allowed to invade what was now, not English, but *papal* soil. Moreover, the abject surrender of John to the Pope, and the oath of fealty he made to him, aroused the fears of the English barons,

³⁵ McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought*, Routledge: London and New York, 1996, p. 123.

³⁶ Aquinas, in Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, London: Allen Unwin, 1946, p. 648.

³⁷ De Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, London: Bantam Press, 1988, p. 71.

whose demands led to the famous Magna Carta of 1215 that limited the powers of the king and is commonly regarded as the beginning of modern western democracy. Thus the despotism of the Pope elicited the beginnings of parliamentary democracy....

Now Magna Carta was a limitation of royal, not papal power. Nevertheless, it affected the papacy, too: first because England was supposed to be a papal fief, but more importantly because it set a dangerous, revolutionary precedent which might be used, not only against kings, but also against Popes! And so Pope Innocent III "from the plenitude of his unlimited power" condemned the charter as "contrary to moral law", "null and void of all validity for ever", absolved the king from having to observe it and excommunicated "anyone who should continue to maintain such treasonable and iniquitous pretensions".

But Archbishop Stephen Langton of Canterbury refused to publish this sentence. And the reason he gave was very significant: "*Natural law is binding on popes and princes and bishops alike: there is no escape from it. It is beyond the reach of the pope himself.*"³⁸

And so the doctrine of natural law opened the way for the people to judge and depose both popes and kings... However, throughout the medieval period and into the beginning of the modern period, natural law remained tied to Christianity and Christian norms of behaviour. And since Christianity in general does not favour rebellion against the powers that be, the full revolutionary potential of the concept was not yet realized.

[2. From Natural Law to Human Rights](#)

However, the concept of natural law needed to be fleshed out. The first question was: If natural law exists, who is the lawgiver? Or, if there is no lawgiver, what is its basis in reality? And the second question was: assuming that a real basis for natural - as opposed to Divine, or ecclesiastical, or state - law exists, what does it prescribe? In particular, since all law implies rights and obligations, what are the rights and obligations legislated by natural law, and to whom are they given?

Considerable "progress" in answering these questions was made in the Early Modern period. During the Renaissance interest began to be focused on the nature of man, and in particular on man's *freedom and dignity* - a promising basis, in the view of the Renaissance man, for a theory of natural law. Thus Leonardo da Vinci wrote: "The chief gift of nature is... freedom."

Again, Pico della Mirandola wrote in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*: "O sublime generosity of God the Father! O highest and most wonderful felicity of Man! To him it was granted to be what he wills. The Father endowed him with

³⁸ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 72.

all kinds of seeds and with the germs of every way of life. Whatever seeds each man cultivates will grow and bear fruit in him.”

So man is supposedly granted “to be what he wills” ... But is he? Is he not in fact constrained in all kinds of ways in what he can do? If by man’s freedom we mean *freewill*, then yes, man has freewill. God’s creation of man in His image means that he is born with freedom and rationality in the image of God’s Freedom and Reason. But that is by no means the same as the ability to “grow the germs of every way of life” in himself. Can a stupid man “grow the germs” of genius within himself? Can a tone-deaf man become a great composer? Can a man become a woman?

However, the idea that man is “born free” now became a commonplace of political thought, and the basis for very far-reaching conclusions about life and morality. If man is born free, then he is not by nature subject to any external power, whether it be God, the Church, the State or the Family. And since he is this by nature, he has the *right to remain* such, and the *right to reject* any attempts to limit his freedom...

If any one man can be said to be its originator of the modern, non-Christian and religionless philosophy of human rights, that man is probably the seventeenth-century Dutch jurist, Hugo Grotius (1583-1645). Grotius was writing under the influence of the wars of religion between Catholics and Protestants, and also the trade wars between European nations such as England, Holland and France. He wanted to find a way of regulating wars in accordance with principles that would be universally accepted. Like most men of his time, he was a Christian, and even wrote a popular work, *On the Truth of the Christian Religion*. However, in his most influential work, *On the Law of War and Peace*, he let slip a phrase that would point the way to a theory of international law and human rights that was completely independent of Christian morality or theology: “Even the will of an omnipotent Being,” he wrote, “cannot change or abrogate” natural law, which “would maintain its objective validity *even if we should assume the impossible, that there is no God or that He does not care for human affairs*” (Prolegomena XI).

According to Grotius, therefore, natural law is *the most* objective truth, more objective, if that were possible, even than the existence of God or God’s care for the world. That being the case, *theoretically* if natural law says that something is right, whereas God says it is wrong, we should stick to natural law. Of course, if natural law derives ultimately from God, there will never be any such conflict between Divine and natural law; but Grotius appears here to envisage the possibility of a world with natural law but without God.

[3. Human Rights and the French Revolution](#)

Let us fast-forward now to the French revolution and the “Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen” that became its theoretical underpinning:

I. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can only be founded on public utility.

II. The purpose of every political association is the preservation of the natural and unalienable rights of men. These rights are liberty, property, and safety from, and resistance to, oppression.

III. The principle of all sovereignty lies in the nation. No body of men, and no individual, can exercise authority which does not emanate directly therefrom.

IV. Liberty consists in the ability to do anything which does not harm others.

V. The Law can only forbid actions which are injurious to society..."

There was no mention in the Declaration of *women's* rights. But in *The Rights of Women and the Citizen* (1791) Olympe de Gouges made up for this deficiency, writing: "1. Woman is born free, and remains equal to Man in rights... 4. The exercise of Woman's natural rights has no limit other than the tyranny of Man's opposing them... 17. Property is shared or divided equally by both sexes." Again, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) Mary Wollstonecraft denied that there were any specifically feminine qualities: "I here throw down my gauntlet, and deny the existence of sexual virtues, not excepting modesty." And there were other additions. Thus Article XXI of the revised Declaration of 1793 stated: "Public assistance is a sacred obligation [*dette*]. Society owes subsistence to unfortunate citizens, whether in finding work for them, or in assuring the means of survival of those incapable of working."³⁹

Pope Pius VI condemned the Declaration of Human Rights. In particular he condemned the idea of "absolute liberty", a liberty "which not only assures people of the right not to be disturbed about their religious opinions but also gives them this licence to think, write and even have printed with impunity all that the most unruly imagination can suggest about religion. It is a monstrous right..."

For God also has rights, said the Pope: "What is more contrary to the rights of the Creator God Who limited human freedom by prohibiting evil, than 'this liberty of thought and action which the National Assembly accords to man in society as an inalienable right of nature'?"⁴⁰

There are two innovations in this revolutionary philosophy. First, the source of authority in society is proclaimed to be neither God, nor any existing political authority, but "the nation". Hence nations are to be seen as free agents with rights, and the source of all particular rights in their own societies.⁴¹

But what constitutes the nation? The essence of the nation, and the source of its rights, is what Rousseau called "the General Will" – a very vague term which

³⁹ Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*, London: Pimlico, 1997, pp. 713-714.

⁴⁰ Jean Comby, *How to Read Church History*, London: SCM Press, 1989, volume 2, p. 113.

⁴¹ This was not such a new notion. Thus Hugh Grotius wrote in *Concerning the Law of Prize* (1604): "Freedom of trade is based on a primitive right of nations".

anybody can claim to represent. At the same time, this “nation” or “General Will” ascribes to itself the most complete power, so that “no body of men, and no individual, can exercise authority which does not emanate directly therefrom.” This immediately destroys the authority, not only of the king, but also of the Church – and indeed, of every other person and body.

The second innovation is the concept of “rights” that are “unprescriptible” – that is, prescribed neither by God nor by man. Man, according to the Declaration, has the unprescriptible “right” to do anything he likes – providing he doesn’t harm others (article 4). However, this latter qualification is not elaborated on, and was in practice ignored completely in the French revolutionary tradition. Thus man is in principle free to do anything whatsoever. The only limitation on his freedom is other men’s freedom: their right not to be limited or restricted by him – the perfect recipe for eternal war.

The history of the philosophy of human rights still had a long way to go. But the essence of everything is already discernible in article 4 of the French Declaration, which in turn goes back to the medieval concept of natural law...

[4. Human Rights in the Twentieth Century](#)

The twentieth century witnessed important developments in the philosophy of human rights. The most important of these was the locating of the source of human rights, not in the sovereign power of the nation or the nation-state, as the French Declaration of Human Rights decreed, but in some supra-national sphere. For most human rights are universal, that is, they are framed in perfectly general terms that apply to all men and women; so to locate their obligatoriness, not in some supra-national or metaphysical sphere, but in particular nations or states that may, and often do, disagree with each other, would seem illogical.

The problem, of course, is that if we pursue this argument to its logical conclusion, it would seem to entail that all national states must give up *their* rights and hand them over to a world government. The idea of a world government goes back at least to Dante’s *De Monarchia* in the early fourteenth century. However, the origin of its modern, secular expression must be sought in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and Immanuel Kant’s *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795), which contained the following axiom: “The law of nations shall be founded on a *federation* of free states”.

This logic appeared to be reinforced by the two World Wars, which discredited nationalism and led to the first international organizations with legal powers over nation-states – the League of Nations and the United Nations.

One of the first to formulate this development was the Viennese Jew and professor of law, Hans Kelsen, in his work, *A Pure Theory of Law*. “The essence of his theory,” according to Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, “was that an obligation to obey the law does not stem from national sovereignty but from a fundamental norm. In practical terms, this led after the First World War to his advocacy of an

Austrian constitutional court as part of the Austrian constitution and, after the Second World War, to support for the idea of an international court with compulsory jurisdiction as a key part of the framework of the United Nations.”⁴²

Another Austrian Jew in the same tradition was Hersch Lauterpacht. His dissertation “combined his interests in jurisprudence and Zionism with an argument about mandates granted by the League of Nations which implied that the mandate given to Britain to govern Palestine did not give Britain sovereignty. Rather, this rested, argued Lauterpacht, with the League of Nations...

“Despite the failure of the League of Nations to prevent Nazi aggression, the Second World War and the murder of his family in the Holocaust, Lauterpacht remained attached to notions of an international legal order. Before his early death in 1960, he served as a judge on the International Court at the Hague. Lauterpacht was devoted to the view that fundamental human rights were superior to the laws of international states and were protected by international criminal sanctions even if the violations had been committed in accordance with existing national laws. He advised the British prosecutors at Nuremburg to this effect. Together with another Jewish lawyer from the Lviv area, Raphael Lemkin, Lauterpacht had a major role in the passage by the United Nations General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Lauterpacht’s publication in 1945, *An International Bill of Rights*, also had a formative influence on the European Convention of Human Rights drawn up in 1949 and ratified in 1953.

“Lauterpacht’s public philosophy was based on the conviction that individuals have rights which do not stem from nation states. He was an internationalist who had a lifelong mistrust of state sovereignty which, to him, reflected the aggression and injustices committed by nation states and the disasters of the two world wars.”⁴³

However, as Pinto-Duschinsky rightly points out, while “international arbitration may be a practical and peaceful way to resolve disputes between countries,.. international courts which claim jurisdiction over individual countries do not coexist comfortably with notions of national sovereignty...”⁴⁴

In spite of that, and in spite of the terrible destruction and blood-letting caused by the idea of positive freedom in the period 1917 to 1945, in 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and

⁴² Pinto-Duschinsky, “The Hijacking of the Human Rights Debate”, *Standpoint*, May, 2012, p. 36. “Central to the Pure Theory of Law is the notion of a 'basic norm (Grundnorm)' - a hypothetical norm, presupposed by the jurist, from which in a hierarchy all 'lower' norms in a legal system, beginning with constitutional law, are understood to derive their authority or 'bindingness'. In this way, Kelsen contends, the bindingness of legal norms, their specifically 'legal' character, can be understood without tracing it ultimately to some suprahuman source such as God, personified Nature or a personified State or Nation” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Kelsen).

⁴³ Pinto-Duschinsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁴ Pinto-Duschinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood... Recognition of the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". While this is anodyne enough, even a superficial reading of history since 1789 should have convinced those who drew up the Declaration to be more specific about the meaning of the words "freedom" and "rights" here. They should have known that very similar statements had served as the foundation of the French revolution, and almost every other bloody revolution right up to the Russian revolution, which at that very moment was still destroying millions of souls in the name of "the spirit of brotherhood" ... In any case, the Communists interpreted human rights in a very different way from the Capitalists. They saw in the theory merely a means of imposing the capitalist world-view. And there was some justification for this: the United Nations was, after all, the child of Roosevelt and his very American (but also leftist) world-view.

As John Gray writes, speaking of human rights in the context of global capitalism: "The philosophical foundations of these rights are flimsy and jerry-built. There is no credible theory in which the particular freedoms of deregulated capitalism have the standing of universal rights. The most plausible conceptions of rights are not founded on seventeenth-century ideas of property but on modern notions of autonomy. Even these are not universally applicable; they capture the experience only of those cultures and individuals for whom the exercise of personal choice is more important than social cohesion, the control of economic risk or any other collective good.

"In truth, rights are never the bottom line in moral or political theory - or practice. They are conclusions, end-results of long chains of reasoning from commonly accepted principles. Rights have little authority or content in the absence of a common ethical life. They are conventions that are durable only when they express a moral consensus. When ethical disagreement is deep a wide appeal to rights cannot resolve it. Indeed, it may make such conflict dangerously unmanageable.

"Looking to rights to arbitrate deep conflicts - rather than seeking to moderate them through the compromises of politics - is a recipe for a low-intensity civil war..."⁴⁵

The attempt to satisfy all desires on the basis of some kind of overarching "right to happiness" must lead in the end, not just to Sodom and Gomorrah, but to the collapse of all civilization. For "we then advance," writes C.S. Lewis, "towards a state of society in which not only each man but every impulse in each man claims carte blanche. And then, though our technological skill may

⁴⁵ Gray, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*, London: Granta Books, 1999, pp. 108-109.

help us survive a little longer, our civilization will have died at heart, and will - one dare not even add 'unfortunately' - be swept away..."⁴⁶

But, as Nicholas Berdiaev pointed out: "Neither 'human rights' nor 'the will of the people', nor both together can be the foundation of human society. For the one contradicts the other: 'the rights of the human personality', understood as the final foundations of society, deny the primacy of social unity; 'the will of the people', as an absolute social basis, denies the principle of personality. There can be, and in fact is, only some kind of eclectic, unprincipled compromise between the two principles, which witnesses to the fact that neither is the primary principle of society. If one genuinely believes in the one or the other, then one has to choose between the unlimited despotism of social unity, which annihilates the personality - and boundless anarchy, which annihilates social order and together with it every personal human existence."⁴⁷

In spite of the manifest failures of these extremes, modern man continues to search for some such foundation for his life. For although He does not believe in God, he does believe in morality. Or rather, he believes in morality for others, not himself. What he really wants is to be free to pursue the life he wants to lead, - the life which brings him the maximum of pleasure and the minimum of pain, - without being interfered with by anybody else, whether God, or the State, or some other individual or group of individuals. However, he knows that in a society without laws, in which *everybody* is free to pursue the life he wants the life he wants to lead without any kind of restriction, he will not achieve his personal goal. For if everybody were completely free in this way, there would be anarchy, and life would be "nasty, brutish and short" - for everybody. So a compromise must be found.

The compromise is a kind of religionless morality. Let some powerful body - preferably the post-revolutionary State, certainly not God or the Church, because God is unpredictably and unpleasantly demanding - impose certain limits on everybody. But let those limits be as restricted and unrestrictive as possible. And let there be a set of rules accepted by all States - preferably enforced by some World Government - that puts limits on the limits that States can place on their citizens. These rules we can then call "human rights", and they can be our morality. Thus "human rights" include *civil and political rights*, such as the right to life and liberty, freedom of expression, and equality before the law; *judicial rights*, like the right to a free trial, and freedom from torture and the death penalty; *sexual rights*, like the rights to have sex of any kind with any consenting adult, reproduce a child by any means, and then destroy it if necessary; and *economic, social and cultural rights*, like the right to participate in culture, to have food and water and healthcare, the right to work, and the right to education. This morality will be permissive in the sense that it will permit very many things previous, more religious ages considered unlawful. But it

⁴⁶ Lewis, "We have no 'right to happiness'", *Faith, Christianity and the Church*, HarperCollins, 2002, p. 392.

⁴⁷ Berdiaev, N. "Religioznie osnovy obschestvennosti" ("The Religious Foundations of Society"), *Put' (The Way)*, № 1, September, 1925, p. 13.

will not permit everything; it will not permit others to interfere with my life of pleasure so long as I don't interfere with theirs...

There will be another important advantage to this system: for those who believe in, and champion, "human rights", it will be a source of great pride and self-satisfaction. They will be able to preach it to others, even *impose* it on others, with the sweet knowledge that they are doing good and serving mankind – no, rather, *saving* mankind.⁴⁸ After all, the 1993 *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* declares: "All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and related. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis". So the belief in, and justification and implementation of, "human rights" will turn out to be a new kind of universal religion, with a new kind of god, a new kind of sanctity and a new kind of paradise – a kingdom of god on earth that is so much more conducive to the needs of modern man than the old kind that was too far away in "heaven" and boringly devoid of the real pleasures of life!

5. Human Rights and Cultural Marxism

Now there is a plausible argument that the philosophy of human rights was invented by Marxists as another way to undermine western society after the collapse predicted by Marx failed to materialize. Thus Bernard Connolly writes that in 1923 one of the founders of the Frankfurt School of social philosophy, Willi Munzenberg, "reflected on the failure of the 'urban proletariat' to mount successful revolutions in economically advanced countries in the way predicted by Marx. To counter that failure it was necessary, he proclaimed, to 'organise the intellectuals and use them to make Western civilization stink. Only then, after they have corrupted all its values and made life impossible, can we impose the dictatorship of the proletariat.' Corrupting the values of Western civilization meant undermining and, ultimately, proscribing all the institutions, traditions, structures and modes of thought ('tools of oppression') that underpinned that civilization. Once national sovereignty and political legitimacy were got out of the way, it would be much easier for a central, unaccountable and malign ('politically correct') government to proscribe all the other foundations of civilization."

Melanie Phillips has endorsed Connolly's thought, describing the onslaught of the philosophy of human rights on traditional Christian culture in Britain as "cultural Marxism", the continuation of the Marxist revolution by other means since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989: "As communism slowly crumbled, those on the far Left who remained hostile towards western civilization found another way to realise their goal of bringing it down.

"This was what might be called 'cultural Marxism'. It was based on the understanding that what holds a society together are the pillars of its culture: the structures and institutions of education, family, law, media and religion.

⁴⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vienna_Declaration_and_Programme_of_Action. This statement was endorsed at the 2005 World Summit in New York (paragraph 121).

Transform the principles and you can thus destroy the society they have shaped.

“The key insight was developed in particular by an Italian Marxist philosopher called Antonio Gramsci. His thinking was taken up by Sixties radicals – who are, of course, the generation that holds power in the West today.

“Gramsci understood that the working class would never rise up to seize the levers of ‘production, distribution and exchange’ as communism had prophesied. Economics was not the path to revolution.

“He believed instead that society could be overthrown if the values underpinning it could be formed into their antithesis: if its core principles were replaced by those of groups who were considered to be outsiders or who actively transgressed the moral codes of that society.

“So he advocated a ‘long march through the institutions’ to capture the citadels of the culture and turn them into a collective fifth column, undermining from within and turning all the core values of society upside-down.

“This strategy has been carried out to the letter.

“The nuclear family has been widely shattered. Illegitimacy was transformed from a stigma into a ‘right’. The tragic disadvantage of fatherlessness was redefined as a neutrally viewed ‘lifestyle choice’.

“Education was wrecked, with its core tenet of transmitting a culture to successive generations replaced by the idea that what children already knew was of superior value to anything the adult world might foist upon them.

“The outcome of this ‘child-centred’ approach has been widespread illiteracy and ignorance and an eroded capacity for independent thought.

“Law and order were similarly undermined, with criminals deemed to be beyond punishment since they were ‘victims’ of society and with illegal drug-taking tacitly encouraged by a campaign to denigrate anti-drugs laws.

“The ‘rights’ agenda – commonly known as ‘political correctness’ – turned morality inside out by excusing any misdeeds by self-designated ‘victim’ groups on the grounds that such ‘victims’ could never be held responsible for what they did.

“Feminism, anti-racism and gay rights thus turned... Christians into the enemies of decency who were forced to jump through hoops to prove their virtue.

“This Through the Looking Glass mind-set rests on the belief that the world is divided into the powerful (who are responsible for all bad things) and the oppressed (who are responsible for none of them).

“This is a Marxist doctrine. But the extent to which such Marxist thinking has been taken up unwittingly even by the Establishment was illustrated by the astounding observation made in 2005 by the then senior law lord, Lord Bingham, that human rights law was all about protecting ‘oppressed’ minorities from the majority...

“When the Berlin Wall fell, we told ourselves that this was the end of ideology. We could not have been more wrong.

“The Iron Curtain came down only to be replaced by a rainbow-hued knuckle duster, as our cultural commissars pulverise all forbidden attitudes in order to reshape western society into a post-democratic, post-Christian, post-moral universe. Lenin would have smiled...”⁴⁹

In 2016 the Czech leader Vaclav Klaus expanded on the incipient totalitarianism of the modern European Union as a result of its humanrightism and Cultural Marxism: “The fall of communism opened the door for freedom and democracy in our countries. We enjoyed it tremendously and **erroneously supposed that freedom is here, and is here to stay**. We were wrong. During the 27 years after the fall of communism, we have slowly begun discovering that we live in a world which is different than the one we dreamt of. It became evident that the lack of freedom is not inevitably connected with only one – however evil – form of totalitarian and authoritarian regime, with communism. **There are other non-democratic isms and institutional arrangements which lead to similar results and consequences.**

“**Due to them we live in a far more socialist and etatist, controlled and regulated society now than we could have imagined 27 years ago.** We feel that we are in number of respects returning back to the arrangements we used to live in the past and which we had considered gone once and for all. I do not have in mind specifically my country but Europe and the Western world as a whole.

“After the fall of communism, my optimism was based on a strong **belief in the power of principles of free society, of free markets, of the ideas of freedom, as well as on a belief in our ability to promote and safeguard these ideas.** Today, coming slowly to the end of the second decade of the 21st century, my feeling is different. Did we have wrong expectations? Were we naive? I don’t think so.

⁴⁹ Phillips, “We were fools to think the fall of the Berlin Wall had killed off the far Left. They’re back – and attacking us from within”, *The Daily Mail*, November 9, 2009, p. 14. Cf. Josh Craddock, “The U.N. wants to force the developing world to accept the sexual revolution”, April 28, 2015, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/417556/new-cultural-imperialism-josh-craddock>.

“1. We knew that socialism, or **socialdemocratism**, or “soziale Marktwirtschaft” is here, is here to stay and – due to its internal dynamics – would expand;

“2. we were always afraid of **the green ideology**, in which we saw a dangerous alternative to the traditional socialist doctrine;

“3. we were aware of **the built-in leftism of intellectuals**. We followed with great concern the “excessive production of under-educated intellectuals” that emerged in the West as a result of the expansion of university education for all;

“4. communism had been based **on an apotheosis of science** and on a firmly rooted hope that science would solve all existing human and social problems. To our great regret, the West believed in the same fallacy.

“I can assure you that we were aware of all that in the moment of the fall of communism. We – perhaps – underestimated some other crucial issues:

“- we probably did not fully appreciate the far-reaching implications of the 1960s, the fact that this “romantic” era was a period of the **radical and destructive denial of the authority, of traditional values and social institutions**;

“- we underestimated that the growing apotheosis of **human rights** was in fact a revolutionary denial of civic rights and of many liberties and behavioral patterns connected with them. Human rights do not need any citizenship. That is why human-rightism calls for the destruction of the sovereignty of individual countries, particularly in today’s Europe...”⁵⁰

[6. An Analysis of the Philosophy](#)

It may be useful at this point to recapitulate our argument by breaking down the human rights philosophy into a syllogistic argument, point by point, as follows:

1. *What is natural is what is right.*
2. *What is natural and right is what we desire.*
3. *All human beings are equal.*
4. *All human beings have the same human nature and more or less the same desires.*
5. *Therefore every human has the right to have whatever he desires provided the satisfaction of his desire does not interfere with the desires of other human beings.*

There are major problems with each of these propositions.

⁵⁰ “The European Freedom Award in the Freedom Endangering European Union”, *Hlavni Strana*, November 5, 2016, <http://www.klaus.cz/clanky/4014>.

1. First, let us ask the question: Why should what is natural be what is right? Why should any natural fact or desire create a right or obligation for us? If I want food, why do I have the right to have food? If I am walking in a desert place and there is no food around and I have forgotten to bring food with me, then I go hungry. But no *right* of mine has been violated - only my will.

Linguistic philosophers in the twentieth century argued that it is impossible to get from a statement of fact to a statement of value, from "is" statements to "ought" statements. So from the fact that I am hungry it is impossible to deduce that I ought to have food in the sense that I have the *right* to have food. We only get from facts to values, from *natural* laws to *moral* laws, by exploiting an apparent ambiguity in the term "law".

"Law" in its original meaning implies a personal lawgiver who *lays down the law*, that is, *prescribes* what should and should not be done: "Thou shalt not kill", "Thou shalt not commit adultery", etc. Outside the context of a rational lawgiver giving laws to rational receivers of the law, the concept of law is strictly speaking inapplicable. However, in a metaphorical sense we can speak of observed regularities in nature as *laws* of nature, the underlying idea being that these regularities did not come into being by chance, but were *commanded* by God: "He spake, and they came to be; He commanded, and they were created" (Psalm 148.5). But of course the elements of nature are not rational beings; they follow the laws of nature, not from choice, but out of necessity; so their obedience to the "laws" of nature creates no moral right or obligation. At the same time, the fact that God both creates natural laws for all creation and prescribes moral laws for rational men shows that there *is* a link between fact and value. That link is God Himself; for He alone is Truth *and* Goodness, the Giver of *both* the natural *and* the moral law.

However, human rights theorists, following Grotius in the seventeenth century, construct their philosophy without assuming the existence of God; and their "self-evident" laws are not prescribed by God or anybody else, but are "unprescriptible", as the 1789 Declaration of Human Rights puts it. Therefore they fail to find - because they do not want to see - the only possible link between the world of facts and the world of values: the commandment of the Creator. In view of this, their attempt to base human rights on natural law collapses...

2. Secondly, why should we assume that all our desires are natural? It is the teaching of the Orthodox Church that all our desires since the fall are in fact fallen, warped, distorted from their original, natural form. However, even in our fallen state we can distinguish between some desires which are *natural*, and other desires which are *unnatural*. Thus the desire for sexual union within lawful marriage is a natural desire, whereas the desire for fornication or, even worse, a homosexual relationship, is unnatural (Fr. Seraphim Rose preferred the word "subhuman"). And then there *supra-natural* desires, which rise above even the permitted, natural desires, such as the desire for virginity for God's

sake. As the Orthodox encyclical quoted above puts it: “there do not exist rights to that which is opposed to nature, but only personal freedom to choose that which is *against nature, according to nature, or above nature.*”

Unfortunately, since the idea of the fall is incompatible with human rights theory, the human rightists have to assume that all desires are in some sense natural. But even leaving aside the idea of the fall, human rightists have to deal with the fact that, in the opinion of most human beings, certain desires are natural and others unnatural. They deal with this problem in a remarkable way: *by simply denying the fact that there are unnatural desires.*

Let us take the key test-case of homosexuality. It is completely obvious that homosexuality is unnatural; it frustrates the biological purpose of sexual intercourse, which is the procreation of children. St. Paul says that male homosexuals “have given up *natural* intercourse to be consumed with passion for each other”, and that female homosexuals “have turned from *natural* intercourse to unnatural practices” (Romans 1.26-27). Until about 1960 the vast majority of people in the western world considered that homosexuality was both unnatural and wrong. The proportion of people who believe this in the West has fallen in more recent decades; but until very recently it remained the official position of the three monotheistic religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, although many Christians now reject it – including, it would seem, the nominal leader of Orthodox Christianity, the Ecumenical Patriarch. And with the rapid increase of Islam in recent decades it is very likely that anti-homosexuality is still the majority opinion. In spite of this, human rights theorists insist that homosexuals have the “right” to practise their perversions. This clearly shows that the human rights agenda is based neither on nature nor on natural law nor even on the “democratic” consensus...

Let us take another example that is still more fundamental: gender neutrality. The modernists’ insistence that gender or sex is not something determined by biology but is a matter of choice. Jan Moir writes: “You might imagine that nothing could be simpler than basic biology, but nothing could be further from the minds of some modern parents.

“Gender is no longer an innocent fact of nature – it is something to be manipulated and quite possibly even reviled.

“The gen-neut parents’ aim is to minimise any preconceived notions of how a child should be behaving according to their gender. They want to lavish the greatest freedom to be themselves upon the little darlings, and also to dispel notions that certain things are only for boys or girls.”⁵¹

The most significant phrase here is: “the greatest freedom to be themselves”. But the reality is that this “gender neutrality” fad is forcing children to be

⁵¹ Moir, “Boys dressed as princesses and the trouble with gender neutral parenting”, *Daily Mail*, November 11, 2016, p. 39.

someone *other than* themselves; it is adults fantasizing at the expense of their children. But this rebellion against nature is bound to have tragic repercussions...

Even when human rights theorists agree that something is *wrong* – for example, paedophilia – they rarely use the argument that it is *unnatural*. After all, if some people *want* to do it, then it must be natural in some sense... Thus paedophilia is *wrong*, it is argued, not because it is unnatural, but because the child is assumed *not* to want it, and therefore it is a violation of *his* human rights. And yet if it could be proved that the child did want it, or that it caused him no objective harm, presumably paedophilia would be as acceptable today as it was in Classical Greece... And indeed, there does exist a movement to give paedophiles the right to practise their perversion.

By the same criterion, it is possible that a whole range of other perversions – incest, bestiality, necrophilia – may one day become acceptable because some people, at any rate, want them, and so these practices must have some basis in human nature. As the homosexual actor Rupert Everett says: “No one’s looking outward anymore. We’ve been trained over the last 30 years to be as selfish as possible. In the new X Factor world it’s enough just to want it. The creative mantra is: ‘I want this so much.’ They want it so they have a right to have it.”⁵²

In the absence of a teaching on the fall, there is no theoretical way to distinguish natural wants from unnatural ones. Thus the only restriction on *my* egoism becomes the possibility that it may clash with *your* egoism. And so if the first axiom of modern ontology is Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am”, the first axiom of modern morality is “I want, therefore I can”...

3 and 4. The essential equality of all men has been an essential part of the human rights philosophy since at least the English and American revolutions. For egalitarianism was the essential tool for the realization of the real aim of the philosophy: to destroy all social, political and ecclesiastical hierarchies. Thus the equality of man was one of those truths that the American Founding Fathers declared to be “self-evident”.

However, it is by no means self-evident that all men are equal. They differ in intelligence, strength, beauty, courage, taste, sporting and musical ability, sense of humour, and in countless other ways. And most important of all, they differ in moral worth... The only thing that makes them in any real sense equal is the fact they are all made in the image of God and have the capacity, through the exercise of their free-will and the grace of God, to become in His likeness. And yet even in the Kingdom of heaven one star differs from another in brightness...

The new science of genetics shows that it is not strictly true that all men have the same human nature; for if a man’s human nature – or, at any rate, his

⁵² Everett, *Daily Mail Weekend*, 2 May, 2015, p. 6.

psycho-physical, if not his spiritual nature – is defined by his DNA, then every man’s DNA is unique. Eve had the same nature as Adam (except her gender). But as their descendants multiplied, so did their differences – although only within the bounds of the species or “kind” determined by God in the beginnings.

Since in the fall men have only relatively similar natures (unlike the absolute identity of the Divine Nature in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit), they also differ in their desires. Some of these differences are trivial: one prefers tea, another – coffee; one man prefers Mozart, another – Bach. But others are less trivial: one man longs for chastity, another – for the satisfaction of his lust at every opportunity. Often the same man will desire quite opposite things, as when St. Augustine prayed: “Lord, give me chastity – but not yet.” This shows that we may even speak of each man, or at any rate each Christian, as having two different human natures – the old Adam and the new Adam. In reality, however, it is not so much that each man has two different natures, but that, as the Orthodox encyclical cited above points out, different men use their *freedom* in different ways: *either* to fulfil the desires of our original, unfallen nature, *or* those of our fallen nature.

And then there are the differences between men which, as has been generally recognized in generation after generation, make a material difference to their rights and obligations: the differences between a man and a child, between a man and a woman, between a knowledgeable man and an ignoramus, between an employer and an employee, etc. In their levelling, egalitarian passion, human rights activists have tended to regard these differences as accidental or inessential, and have created special categories of “children’s rights”, “women’s rights”, “students’ rights”, “workers’ rights”, etc., in order to iron out the differences. These “rights”, in the opinion of Cultural Marxists and Feminists, are necessary corrections made to distortions created by the oppressive, capitalist, patriarchal society of the West.

Now it must be admitted that this human rights legislation has often had beneficial effects in abolishing unjust discrimination and cruelty that is based more on prejudice than on reason. However, the fact of unjust discrimination in some, even many cases does not alter the fact that many of the physical, sexual, maturational, psychological and social differences between human beings are important, permanent and not in need of any “correction” or “positive discrimination”, but should simply be accepted for what they are – permanent and ineradicable differences in nature. Thus if we take the example of the differences between men and women, these cannot and must not be abolished. Women, like men, are made in the image of God (Genesis 1.26) – this is the essential commonality, which means that both sexes are rational, free and destined for eternal life in God. But there are characteristically different patterns of desire and ability which mean that men and women have different roles in life – as almost every society before our own has recognized. For example, men are better at most kinds of physical work, and so should have the priority there, while women are better at the raising of children and should

therefore have the priority there. Our society, however, obsessed and corrupted as it is by the idea of human rights, now seeks, perversely and disastrously, to feminize men and masculinize women!

Christianity teaches *love*, not egalitarianism. Thus St. Paul exhorts masters and slaves to love and respect each other, but forbids slaves to rebel against their masters – and says not a word about their “right” to freedom. It is love, not egalitarianism, that relieves the sufferings of men... Revolutions commonly aim at achieving some kind of egalitarianism, whether between social classes or nations. However, being the fruit, not of love, but of hatred and envy, they only make things worse – much worse. Nor will they ever destroy hierarchy in society, because God created men to live in hierarchical societies, not only because they are in fact *unequal* in all sorts of ways, but also because learning to bow before a superior is essential to acquiring humility.

5. The only serious check that human rights theorists admit on the absolute freedom and right of human beings to do whatever they want is the so-called harm principle, which was enshrined in article 4 of the original 1789 Declaration of Human Rights and was developed by John Stuart Mill in his famous essay, *On Liberty*. Mill, fully in keeping with the Anglo-Saxon “freedom from” tradition, sees the harm principle not so much as restriction *on* liberty, as an affirmation *of* liberty, an affirmation of the individual’s right to be free from the control, not only of the state, but of any “tyrannical majority” in matters that were his private business: “The object of this essay is to assert one very simple principle, as entitled to govern absolutely the dealings of society with the individual in the way of compulsion and control, whether the means to be used be physical force in the form of legal penalties or the moral coercion of public opinion. That principle is that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinion of others, to do so would be wise or even right. These are good reasons for remonstrating with him, or reasoning with him, or persuading him, or entreating him, but not for compelling him or visiting him with any evil in case he do otherwise. To justify that, the conduct from which it is desired to deter him must be calculated to produce evil to someone else. The only part of the conduct of anyone or which it is amenable to society is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.”⁵³ Mill asserted that this “Liberty Principle” or “Harm Principle” applied only to people in “the maturity of their faculties”, not to children or to “those backward states of society in which the race itself

⁵³ Mill, *On Liberty*, London: Penguin Classics, 1974, pp. 68-69.

may be considered as in its nonage.”⁵⁴ For “Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved through free and equal discussion.”⁵⁵

However, everything depends on what we mean by “harm”. And that depends on our fundamental belief-system. For example, let us take the case of homosexuality. It is said that this vice is in fact “moral” so long as it is between two consenting adults, and that it does harm neither to them nor to society as a whole. But is that true?

One obvious harmful effect is HIV, which is clearly that “penalty” of which St. Paul says: “men with men committing that which is shameful, receiving in themselves [i.e. in their own bodies] the penalty of their error which was due” (Romans 1.27). HIV is mainly, although not exclusively, spread by homosexual activity. For that very rational reason homosexuality remains a criminal offence in several African countries. Not so in the West! Why? It is difficult to find a rational answer to this question. After all, smoking has long ago been banned in the West because of its proven links to lung cancer; it is a health threat both to smokers and to those “passive smokers” who inhale their smoke. For similar reasons we place severe restrictions on the use of poisons and (except in the USA) guns; and we do not allow people to drive faulty cars or other kinds of potentially lethal machinery. But no restrictions whatsoever are placed on homosexual behavior, which kills just as surely (on average, homosexuals die much younger than heterosexuals). Of course, “safe sex” is encouraged in our society - but is not compulsory, and very often not practised. Moreover, vast amounts of money are poured into research on HIV, and HIV patients demand to have the latest medicines even if they are very expensive - and that money could be used more cost-effectively on other kinds of illness.⁵⁶ Again, homosexual couples are allowed and even encouraged to adopt children, although this deprives the child of the vitally important experience - vitally important for his normal psychological development - of growing up with both a mother and a father.

So the so-called right to homosexuality fails the “Harm Principle” test in a resounding manner. It both harms the individuals who practice it and the whole of society, which has to pay for the diseases that accompany it and the consequences of an increasingly geriatric population. And yet all these undoubted harmful consequences pale by comparison with the penalty of eternal damnation that homosexuals receive after death...

So it all comes down to the fundamental question: what is the ultimate good of man?... But this question can only be answered by answering the further questions: “Who made us?” “What did He make us for?” “Can the goal of

⁵⁴ Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 69.

⁵⁵ Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 69.

⁵⁶ “A perverse ruling on the NHS’s priorities”, *The Daily Mail*, November 11, 2016, p. 16.

human life as created by God be attained by striving to fulfil all our fallen human desires?"

These are religious questions that are resolutely pushed aside by human rights theorists. They start, by contrast, from the premise that the goal of human life is not prescribed by God, but by ourselves, and consists solely in the satisfaction of fallen desire... This anti-religious bias of the philosophy of human rights arose from its original need to create a rational basis for resolving *conflict* within and between societies. Although its originators considered themselves to be Christians, Christian teaching was eliminated from the beginning as the basis of conflict resolution, since the Pope was considered the final judge in matters of Christian teaching – although the Pope was the cause of most of the conflicts in the first place! The basis therefore had to be *above* Christianity – while incorporating Christian values, since the warring parties were still (at that time) Christians. It had to be a “self-evident”, common-sense consensus on which all the parties could agree. And if a philosophical rationale for this consensus was required, it was to be found in the common human needs and desires that all the parties shared.

However, this whole approach was implicitly *anti-Christian* for two important reasons. First, by placing something other than the Word of God at the base of the theoretical structure, it was implicitly asserting that a human philosophy can supplement, complement, or, still worse, *improve on* the Word of God. And secondly, it implies that the purpose of life is to satisfy the fallen desires of human nature, which is an essentially *pagan* approach to life.

[Conclusion: The Orthodox Response](#)

“If God does not exist,” says one of Dostoyevsky’s characters, “then everything is permitted.” For God and His commandments are the only foundation of morality. Every other foundation devised by the wit of man has proved to be porous, unstable, liable at any moment to dissolve into the abyss of anarchical egotism, on the one hand, or tyrannical despotism, on the other. Human rightism is a philosophy that leads to anarchical egotism and the unbridled satisfaction of all and every kind of passion.

Recently, the True Orthodox Church of Greece, in response to the Greek Marxist government’s immoral “Cohabitation Agreement” regardless of gender (December, 2015), which in effect legalized same-sex “marriage”, declared: “The Greek Parliament was not obligated, nor did it have the authority from the Greek people to legislate against Divine and Natural Law, nor to legalize alternative forms of families supposedly in the name of Human Rights, because in our Greek Orthodox Tradition there do not exist rights to that which is opposed to nature, but only personal freedom to choose that which is against nature, according to nature, or above nature.

“Rights and Freedoms are not identical in this context, nor are they defined by secular laws which equate Man with animals, Light with darkness, Truth

with falsehood, the genuine with the illegitimate, the Sacred with the profane, the Holy with the unholy and profane."⁵⁷

The revolution sparked off by the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* in 1789 is continuing today, not as bloodily as before, but more extreme than ever in the absurdity and multiplicity of its claims. Thus the numbers of "human rights" have increased exponentially. The fact that many of these rights contradict each other (for example, the right to life contradicts the right to abortion), and that there is no way that more than a fraction of these rights can be fulfilled for more than a fraction of the world's population for the foreseeable future, only increases the zeal and ambition of the "human righters", who believe that they alone can put the world to right.

Now every minority group that has not fulfilled its desires to the utmost claims victim status, the violation of its "human rights", and blames the oppressor state and society. If Mill feared above all the "tyranny of the majority", and therefore championed the rights of every eccentric to express his views (provided they were "decent"), today, by contrast, because of the "cultural Marxism" that has taken the place of traditional Marxism, it is the tyranny of innumerable minorities that has taken over society, outlawing "the silent majority". However, if the majority *remains* silent, then there is only one possible outcome: one of these minorities - and it will undoubtedly be an antichristian minority - will take complete and tyrannical control over all.

So the stakes could not be higher. Humanrightism must be rejected in favour of a truly Christian morality, so that we should be "as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God" (I Peter 2.16).

January 21 / February 3, 2009; revised June 14/27, 2012, August 13/26, 2013, April 19 / May 2, 2015, January 24 / February 6, 2016 and October 29 / November 11, 2016.

⁵⁷ "Informative and Admonitory Encyclical", January 12/25, 2016, <http://ecclesiagoc.gr/index.php/anakoinwseis/886-informative-and-admonitory-encyclical>.

8. PELAGIANISM AND THE COUNCIL OF LLANDEWI BREFI

We know of only one important Church Council that took place during the period of the Celtic Church. This was the Council of Llandewi Brefi in West Wales in the mid-sixth century. It became famous because of a great miracle that took place in it that helped the triumph of Orthodoxy over the native British heresy of Pelagianism.

Pelagius was born in Britain in about 354, and arrived in Rome in about 380. Being himself an ascetic, and appalled by the lax moral standards of the Romans, he felt that the element of Divine Grace was overemphasized among the Christians, and the element of personal struggle – that is, of free will – underestimated. This led him to deny the doctrine of the inheritance of original sin. In 410, after the sack of Rome by Alaric, he went to North Africa, where he met the man who was to become his chief critic – St. Augustine of Hippo. In about 412 he left for Palestine, where he was accused of heresy by a council in Jerusalem in 415. Although he was acquitted there, after the publication of his work “On Free Will” in 416, he was condemned by two African Councils and by another Council convened in Rome by Pope Innocent in 417. The following Pope, Zosimus, at first acquitted him, but after a Council in Carthage in 418 condemned him again, Zosimus joined his voice to the Council’s nine canons against Pelagius. The Third Ecumenical Council in 431 confirmed the condemnation of Pelagianism.

Although defeated on the continent, the heresy of Pelagius continued to thrive in Britain, and in 429 the Gallic bishop, St. Germanus of Auxerre, who was the trainer and instructor of a whole generation of British monks and hierarchs, was invited by the British Orthodox to come to England and help them combat the heresy. He defeated the heresy in council, and even helped the British soldiers to organize a victory over the pagan Saxon invaders (he had been a Roman general before accepting the tonsure). In 447 he came again, accompanied by St. Lupus of Troyes, and perhaps also by St. Patrick.⁵⁸

But the heresy lingered on, especially, probably, in the upper classes of society⁵⁹, and at some time between 545 and 569 the British Church itself convened a Council to refute the heretics, as told by Rhigyfarch in the eleventh century:

“Since even after St. Germanus’s second visit of help the Pelagian heresy was recovering its vigour and obstinacy, implanting the poison of a deadly serpent in the innermost regions of our country, a general synod is assembled of all the bishops of Britain. In addition to a gathering of 118 bishops, there was present an innumerable multitude of priests, abbots, clergy of other ranks, kings, princes, lay men and women, so that the very great host covered all the

⁵⁸ See “Svyatitel’ Patrikij, Prosvetitel’ Irlandii”, *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn’*, December, 1999, p. 5.

⁵⁹ In their debates with St. Germanus, the Pelagians are described as “men of obvious wealth” (Constantius of Lyons, *Life of Germanus*, 3.14).

places round about. The bishops confer amongst themselves, saying: 'The multitude present is too great to enable, not only a voice, but even the sound of a trumpet to reach the ears of them all. Almost the entire throng will be untouched by our preaching, and will return home, taking with them the infection of the heresy.' Consequently, it is arranged to preach to the people in the following manner. A mound of garments was to be erected on some rising ground, and one at a time was to preach, standing upon it. Whoever should be endowed with such a gift of preaching that his discourse reached the ears of all that were furthest, he, by common consent, should be made metropolitan and archbishop. Thereupon, a place called Brevi is selected, a lofty mound of garments is erected, and they preach with all their might. But their words scarcely reach those that are nearest, it is as though their throats seem constricted; the people await the Word, but the largest portion does not hear it. One after another endeavours to expound, but they fail utterly. A great crisis arises; and they fear that the people will return home with the heresy uncrushed. 'We have preached,' said they, 'but we do not convince; consequently our labour is rendered useless.' Then arose one of the bishops, named Paulinus, with whom aforetime, holy Dewi the bishop had studied; 'There is one,' said he, 'who has been made a bishop by the patriarch⁶⁰, who has not attended our synod; a man of eloquence, full of grace, experienced in religion, an associate of angels, a man to be loved, attractive in countenance, magnificent in appearance, six feet in stature. Him I advise you to summon here.'

"Messengers are immediately dispatched, who come to the holy bishop, and announce the reason for their coming. But the holy bishop declined, saying: 'Let no man tempt me. Who am I to succeed where those have failed? I know my own insignificance. Go in peace.' A second and a third time messengers are sent, but not even then did he consent. Finally, the holiest and the most upright men are sent, the brethren, Daniel [Bishop of Bangor in North Wales] and Dubricius [Archbishop of Llandaff]. But the holy bishop Dewi, foreseeing it with prophetic spirit, said to the brethren: 'This day, my brethren, very holy men are visiting us. Welcome them joyfully, and for their meal procure fish in addition to bread and water.' The brethren arrive, exchange mutual greetings and converse about holy things. Food is placed on the table, but they insist that they will never eat a meal in his monastery unless he returns to the synod along with them. To this the saint replied: 'I cannot refuse you; proceed with your meal, we will go together to the synod. But then, I am unable to preach there: I will give you some help, little though it be, with my prayers.'

"So setting forth, they reach the neighbourhood of the synod, and lo, they heard a wailing and lamentation. Said the saint to his companions; 'I will go to the scene of this great lamentation.' But his companions said in reply; 'But let

⁶⁰ The Patriarch of Jerusalem (probably Elias), who had consecrated David and his companions Teilo and Paternus on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The patriarch gave David a portable altar as a gift. Today, a very ancient square stone object inscribed with crosses, which could perhaps have served as an altar, can be found today in St. David's cathedral under a large icon of the Prophet Elias.

us go to the assembly, lest our delaying grieve those who await us.' The man of God approached the place of the mourning; and lo, there a bereaved mother was keeping watch over the body of a youth, to whom, with barbaric uncouthness, she had given a lengthy name. He comforted and raised the mother, consoling and encouraging her; but she, having heard of his fame, flung herself forward at his feet, begging him with cries of entreaty to take pity on her. Filled with compassion for human weakness, he approached the body of the dead boy, whose face he watered with his tears. At length, the limbs grew warm, the soul returned, and the body quivered. He took hold of the boy's hand and restored him to his mother. But she, her sorrowful weeping turned into tears of joy, then said; 'I believed that my son was dead; let him henceforth live to God and to you.' The holy man accepted the boy, laid on his shoulder the Gospel-book which he always carried in his bosom, and made him go with him to the synod. That boy, afterwards, while life lasted, lived a holy life.

"He then enters the synod; the company of bishops is glad, the multitude is joyful, the whole assembly exults. He is asked to preach, and does not decline the synod's decision. They bid him ascend the mound piled up with garments; and, in the sight of all, a snow-white dove from heaven settled on his shoulder, and remained there as long as he preached. Whilst he preached, with a loud voice, heard equally by those who were nearest and those who were furthest, the ground beneath him grew higher, rising to a hill; and, stationed on its summit, visible to all as though standing on a lofty mountain, he raised his voice until it rang like a trumpet: on the summit of that hill a church is situated. The heresy is expelled, the faith is confirmed in sound hearts, all are of one accord, and thanks are rendered to God and St. David."⁶¹

Shortly after this Council, says Rhigyfarch, there was another Council, called the Synod of Victory, which "reaffirmed the decisions of its predecessor". The records of these Councils were written down by St. David, but had been lost by the eleventh century. However, from a Breton manuscript we do have seven disciplinary canons attributed to a West British Synod, and another sixteen to "another Council of the Victory of Light [Luci]". It is likely that these Councils are the same as those led by St. David.⁶²

A word should be said, finally, about St. Dubricius (Dyfrig), who before the Council had been the archbishop of Wales. According to tradition he had crowned King Arthur and was "the father of Welsh monasticism". Recognizing the sanctity of St. David, he now humbly resigned the archbishopric and handed it over to him...⁶³

April 21 / May 4, 2015.

⁶¹ Rhigyfarch's *Life of St. David*, chapters 49-52.

⁶² A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869, 1964, vol. I, pp. 116-120.

⁶³ Kenneth Fields, "St. Deiniol - Founder of Bangor", *Catholic Life*, April, 2008, pp. 62-63.

9. FROM LENIN TO PUTIN: THE CONTINUITY OF SOVIET POWER

Most Orthodox Christians agree that the State founded by Lenin in October, 1917 was the most evil in human history to this date. A regime that was openly and officially antichristian overthrew the greatest Christian empire in history and proceeded to try and destroy everything and everyone that in any way retained any kind of loyalty or similarity to the pre-revolutionary past. Recalling the French revolution, but much more radical, the Russian revolution killed perhaps one hundred million of its own, Soviet citizens, and many millions more in other countries, blanketing, at its greatest extent, the whole land mass from Berlin to Vladivostok in a nightmare of militant atheism that caused those who were under threat of being returned to it to commit suicide in droves...

However, there is much less agreement on whether the present-day regime of Vladimir Putin is a continuation and resurrection of the Leninist regime or not. This is an important question; for in 1918, at her last genuine Local Council, the Russian Orthodox Church led by Martyr-Patriarch Tikhon anathematized the Soviet regime forbidding her members to have anything whatsoever to do with these "outcasts of humanity". (Only against the regimes of Julian the Apostate and Napoleon has the Orthodox Church ever issued similar decrees.) This "decree of irreconcilability" has never been rescinded, so if the Putinist regime is truly the successor of the Leninist one, our attitude to it must be similarly irreconcilable. The question therefore is: is the present-day Putinist regime Leninist in essence?

In order to answer this question we have to separate what is essential to Leninism from what is not, and ask whether Putin retains that essence even if in many other ways his regime may be very different... Our thesis is that the essence of Leninism is *loyalty to Lenin himself*, and that while many things have changed since 1917, devotion to Lenin, and a refusal to condemn him or his reincarnation, Stalin, remains the bond binding together all the epochs of Soviet and post-Soviet history to the present day, as witnessed above all by the continuing worship of his body in the mausoleum on Red Square. Lenin's teachings are no longer believed in, his party no longer holds power, even his vitriolic hatred of God and Christianity has gone. But he himself remains alive and well in the hearts of the majority of the Russian people. And it is this psychological and spiritual bond, more powerful than any ideological sympathy or antipathy, that makes Leninism a continuing force. Moreover, it is a force that any succeeding leader like Putin can tap into - so long as the idol still remains in place. And why does the idol still remain in place? Because neither in 1991 nor at any other time has there been any thoroughgoing *repentance* for the sins of the Soviet past or formal renunciation of Lenin.

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Let us briefly summarize the main stages of Russian history since 1917:-

- 1. 1917-21.** The first three-and-a-half years of Soviet power present us with all the familiar signs of Leninism: theft, murder, blasphemy, sexual depravity, civil and international war – all on an industrial, unprecedented scale. Before the revolution, revolutionaries like Stalin robbed banks and post offices. After the revolution, they robbed whole classes and provinces – and then raped and murdered the inhabitants. “War communism” established the principle that nothing, nothing whatsoever is holy – and especially not the Holy Church. However, in March, 1921, the Thirteenth Party Congress established that “factionalism”, i.e. dissent, is forbidden, and that one thing after all *is* holy – the will of the Party as expressed in the will of Lenin. This decree on the “dictatorship of the Party”, which was in fact the dictatorship of Lenin, formalized the essence of Leninism.
- 2. 1921-28.** Having established the essence of the system as being his own infallibility as the Vicar of History, Lenin could afford to relax on other, less important principles of communism. Thus the New Economic Policy, the reintroduction of a limited degree of capitalism and private property and a certain let-up in religious persecution was allowed... However, the death of Lenin in January, 1924 raised the question: how to preserve the essence of Leninism without Lenin himself? The answer was: the preservation of the body of Lenin, and the institution of its worship. Now even while leaders might change, and policies might change, Lenin himself remained – unchanging and eternal.⁶⁴
- 3. 1928-39.** Nevertheless, the need for a single infallible *will* remained, and Lenin could no longer express that will from beyond the grave. So his successor, the new Lenin, has to be found. After much political infighting, Stalin won the battle for recognition as the new Lenin, and proceeded to re-establish the absolute unity of will by eliminating all his opponents, actual and potential. This involved, among other things, killing 14 million Ukrainians by famine, driving the True Church into the underground, and eliminating all the Old Bolsheviks who remembered that Stalin was not Lenin.
- 4. 1939-45.** In Germany, however, there emerged another infallible will whom even Stalin could not destroy. And so, searching as ever for new means of consolidating his rule, Stalin decided to borrow certain things from Hitler (just as Hitler, by his own admission, borrowed certain things from Stalin). The internationalism of world revolution was now dropped (together with its main advocate, Trotsky), and in its place came “socialism in one country”. Instead of denigrating the whole of Russian history, certain aspects of it (especially the despotism of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great) were recalled with pride. Patriotism ceased to be a dirty word, and the official church was now used as a vehicle for stirring it up in believers – only its object now was not Orthodox Russia, but anti-Orthodox Russia. And these new emotional resources proved to be

⁶⁴ Alexei Yurchak, “Bodies of Lenin: The Hidden Science of Communist Sovereignty”, *Representations*, Winter, 2015, pp. 116-157.

invaluable when Hitler invaded Russia; with their aid, the unnatural situation of two infallible popes was corrected by Stalin's victory over the anti-pope.

5. **1945-53.** Now, however, Stalin reverted to type. The nationalist deviation, permissible during the struggle against Hitler, was corrected as the revolution again recovered its internationalist direction. (At the same time, the newest member of the Leninist club, Mao's China, was made to feel in no uncertain terms that it was a very junior partner to Soviet Russia.) The main external enemy, again, was Anglo-Saxon capitalism; Orthodoxy was again repressed, unless it was expressed in support of the infallible leader; and the numbers of those in the camps surpassed even their pre-war peak.
6. **1953-91.** With the death of Stalin, the struggle to find the new Lenin began again. In 1956, one of the contenders, Khrushchev, exposed the sins of Stalin at a secret meeting of the Party. But this was like a Roman cardinal saying that the Pope was not infallible - Khrushchev was found insufficiently Leninist and fell from power. However, none of his successors - Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko and Gorbachev - was able to plug the credibility gap that now opened up, and as the inferiority of the Soviet system to its capitalist rival became more and more evident the desperate attempt of Gorbachev to import some western flexibility and freedom into social and economic life led to the collapse of the Soviet empire and the break-up of the Union itself.
7. **1991-2000.** The 1990s, the period of Yeltsin's presidency, represented the moment when it looked to many as if Leninism were finally doomed. Something resembling real democracy and the free market was introduced. But the market reforms were so radical and sudden - introduced by Chicago-school advocates of "shock therapy" as the only method of changing communism into capitalism - that millions found themselves plunged into poverty, while a few clever entrepreneurs with links to the government - the so-called "oligarchs" - made vast fortunes through rigged privatisations. The result: capitalism was discredited in the minds of the people. Again, when the supposed democrat Yeltsin, determined to push through his reforms come what may, defied the sentence of the Constitutional Court and sent the tanks against the elected delegates of the Duma, the result was the discrediting also of democracy in the minds of the people.⁶⁵ But still more serious was the "acquitting" of the Communist Party in a quasi-trial in 1992, the failure of the True Russian Church to oust the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate (whose bishops remain are now, as in Soviet times, KGB agents) and above all, the failure to remove Lenin from the mausoleum. So the essence of Leninism remained intact...

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⁶⁵ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, London: Penguin, 2007, chapters 11 and 12.

When Putin came to power on the first day of the new millennium, he soon demonstrated his political sympathies. The fall of the Soviet Union, he said, had been “a geopolitical tragedy”. Such, perhaps, was only to be expected of a former KGB agent who had been appointed head of the KGB-FSB only a few years before. Unfortunately, however, most of the western world, and even the Orthodox world, chose to ignore these facts. They were determined to believe that Putin’s regime represented, not a KGB-staged coup and the beginning of a gradual return to Sovietism, but a continuation of the Yeltsin regime, albeit at a slower pace of political and economic change.

Of course, the *pretence* of continuity with the Yeltsin regime was preserved: Yeltsin himself handed over power to (the unelected) Putin, and multi-party elections to the Duma remained in existence. However, in the course of time the largest parties (including the communists) turned out to be suspiciously close to Putin in their views, failing to form a real opposition; his own elections were manifestly rigged, and the system changed to enable him to rule virtually uninterrupted until the present; and the last vestiges of democracy at the local, provincial level were eliminated. Moreover, Putin evolved a doctrine of “sovereign democracy” which meant, in effect, that Russia was a “democracy” but with himself as sovereign. Thus, as Roger Bootle writes, “In place of the tired and rotten value system of Communism, the prime value and objective of the modern Russian state is quite simply *pro bono Putino...*”⁶⁶

But this, too, is quintessentially communist; for in the last analysis Lenin and Stalin did not rule for the benefit of anyone other than themselves...

A deeper and more sinister continuity was that the stripping of Russia’s natural resources continued – only by a different clan of bandits... When considering the Putinist mafia state’s pillaging of the national assets, we must remember that Leninism and banditism have existed in the closest symbiosis ever since Stalin robbed the Tbilisi bank and the Sochi post office to provide Lenin with funds for revolutionary terror in the early 1900s. The victims in the 1920s were the nobles, the industrialists and the Church, in the 1930s - the peasants, the generals and the Old Bolsheviks, in the 1940s - the Germans, the Crimean Tatars and other conquered peoples, and in the 1990s - all small-time investors and account-holders. In the 2000s it was the oligarchs’ turn: in true Leninist style, Putin “expropriated the expropriators”. However, far from Putin “cleaning up” the country after the oligarchs’ excesses in the 1990s, which is what he claimed to be doing, he simply replaced one clan of bandits with another, sharing out the proceeds among those who recognized his power as the chief thief.

The transfer here was effected, not by Yeltsin, but by the Jewish oligarch Berezovsky, who hoped that Putin would rule to the advantage of him and his clan. (Since Yeltsin had also been involved in the pillaging, Putin’s first act as president was to give immunity from prosecution to Yeltsin and his family.)

⁶⁶ Bootle, *The Trouble with Europe*, London: Nicholas Brealy Publishing, 2015, p. 215.

However, Berezovsky was deceived: Putin put his own St. Petersburg mafia in charge and forced Berezovsky to flee into English exile until his recent mysterious "suicide". Others who pretended to some measure of political and economic independence, such as Khodorkovsky, were imprisoned on trumped-up charges and/or driven out of the country...

Now Putin was free to become the godfather of all godfathers; he and his cronies made fabulous gains, most of which were spirited abroad; and Putin himself, according to the *Sunday Times*, became the world's richest man... Taking advantage of the high prices for oil and gas, Putin was able to distribute some of the profits to the middle classes, keeping them happy for the time being. (There were murmurings from them in 2012, but these were comparatively easily suppressed.) Moreover, he increased the numbers of bureaucrats, 40% of whom were KGB, and fattened their pay packets - in this way he guaranteed their support, a tactic he borrowed from the Bolsheviks in the Civil War period...

But the poor remained poor, and the gap between the richest and the poorest became the highest in the world except in some Caribbean islands. State institutions and services, such as education and health, were starved of funds. The only notable exceptions were the armed forces and the security services, which received vast increases reminiscent of Hitler's rearming in the 1930s.

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Like all Soviet leaders, Putin shows a marked antipathy to the West, and a steadfast conviction that his country is morally superior to the West. The problem is: the extreme moral degradation of contemporary Russian society is plain for all to see. The most obvious explanation for this is the many decades of Soviet rule, when religious faith was persecuted and morality was equated with what was beneficial for the revolution. However, Putin deals with this problem by putting the blame exclusively on the Yeltsin period (because that was the most westernizing). Before Yeltsin, he argued in 2012 in a speech to the Federal Assembly, Soviet society had been distinguished by "charity, compassion and sympathy" (!) "Today," however, "Russian society has an obvious deficit in spiritual bonds, a deficit in everything that made us at all times stronger, more powerful, in which we always prided ourselves - that is, such phenomena as charity, compassion and sympathy... The situation that has been created is a consequence of the fact that some 15 to 20 years ago 'the ideological stamps of the former epoch' were rejected... Unfortunately, at that time many moral signposts were lost..."

The following year, however, at the Valdai forum at which many westerners were present, Putin felt able to boast that, in spite of this "obvious deficit in spiritual bonds", Russia under his rule preserved "Christian values" better than the West: "We see that many Euro-Atlantic countries have de facto gone down the path of the rejection of... Christian values. Moral principles are being denied... What could be a greater witness of the moral crisis of the human

socium than the loss of the capacity for self-reproduction. But today practically all developed countries can no longer reproduce themselves. Without the values laid down in Christianity and other world religions, without the norms of ethics and morality formed in the course of millennia, people inevitably lose their human dignity. And we consider it natural and right to defend these values.”⁶⁷

The strange thing about this extraordinarily hypocritical statement is that Putin pretends to be entirely unconscious of the fact that with regard to the “Christian value” that he specifically cites here, “self-reproduction”, Russia performs worse than any western country. Thus even after taking migration into account, the twenty-eight countries of the European Union have a natural growth in population that is twice as high as Russia’s! And if he is referring not to the balance between the birth rate and the death rate, but to *homosexuality* as a factor that by definition inhibits reproduction, then the situation is little better in Russia than in the West. For in spite of Putin’s much-vaunted ban on pro-gay propaganda to minors, the vice remains legal among adults. Thus a marriage between two women was recently registered officially in Moscow.⁶⁸ Homosexuality even flourishes in places from which it should have been banished first of all. Thus among the three hundred bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate, 50 according to one estimate (Fr. Andrei Kuraev) and 250 according to another (Fr. Gleb Yakunin) are homosexuals...

In other spheres relating to morality, Russia, according to United Nations statistics, occupies the following positions in the world league tables:

- 1st in suicides of adults, children and adolescents;
- 1st in numbers of children born out of wedlock;
- 1st in children abandoned by parents;
- 1st in absolute decline in population;
- 1st in consumption of spirits and spirit-based drinks;
- 1st in consumption of strong alcohol;
- 1st in tobacco sales;
- 1st in deaths from alcohol and tobacco;
- 1st in deaths from cardiovascular diseases;
- 2nd in fake medicine sales;
- 1st in heroin consumption (21st in world production).

These statistics show that Russia, far from leading the world in the practice of Christian virtue, is perhaps the most corrupt country of all. As regards general criminality, theft, corruption and murder (including abortion), Russia is very near the top of the league, and this not least because the government itself has taken the lead in these activities, making Russia into a mafia state run

⁶⁷ Andrei Movchan, “Rossia i Zapad: kto moral’nee?” (Russia and the West: who is more moral?), http://slon.ru/russia/rossiya_i_zapad_kto_moralnee-1114248.xhtml, June 17, 2014.

⁶⁸ “V Moskve pozhenili dvukh nevest” (In Moscow two brides were married), <http://www.kp.ru/daily/26270/3148680/>

by and for a small clique of fantastically rich criminals. Thus the general picture is one of *extreme moral degradation*.

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Moral degradation within the country is matched by cruelty and hatred to those outside... The most important of Putin's decisions in the early years was his re-starting of the war against the Chechens, which he carried out with extreme brutality. The KGB provided the justification for the war by blowing up an apartment block in Ryazan, killing four hundred people, and blaming the atrocity on Chechen terrorists... Whistle-blowers and truth-seekers were found who exposed these crimes, such as the journalist Anna Politkovskaya and the former agent Litvinenko. But they were simply murdered (Litvinenko through a mini-atomic bomb).⁶⁹

Having imposed a pro-Russian puppet government on the Chechens, Putin now turned to other "troublemakers". But not before declaring, at Munich in 2007, that Russia reserved the right of first strike in a nuclear war – a right that not even the Soviet Union had ever claimed. Although the world appeared not to notice, Russia appeared not simply to have recommenced the Cold War, but to be preparing for a hot, thermonuclear one...

Then, in the next year Russia invaded Georgia, punishing them for their "Orange" revolution in favour of the West and annexing Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

"Moreover," writes Armando Marques Guedes, "the Russian Administration signalled it was set for a sort of repeat performance. Toward the end of December 2008, the Kremlin announced an upgrade and an unexpected large-scale restructuring of its Armed Forces, along with a change in its military doctrine. All of this – as was later explained by the Russian Minister of Defence – was engaged in so that her Armed Forces would be ready to fight on 'three fronts simultaneously in local and regional conflicts such as that of Georgia'. He thereafter defined the 'post-Soviet space' as the preferred location for such interventions, which he envisioned as coming to pass 'during the year' of 2009..."⁷⁰

This actually came to pass a little later, in 2014, with the annexation of Crimea and military intervention in the Donbass, where Putin's actions resembled those of Milosevic in the former Yugoslavia.⁷¹ In both cases, the strategy was to rebuild a failed communist empire-state by artificially stirring up ethnic conflicts in neighbouring states that have separated from the empire. Then troops are sent in on the pretence of "liberating" co-ethnics (Russians and

⁶⁹ Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War*, London: Bloomsbury, 2008, pp. 105-107.

⁷⁰ Guedes, "The 'Five Day War', The Invasion of Georgia by the Russian Federation", pp. 9-10.

⁷¹ Vera Mironova and Maria Snegovaya, "Putin is behaving in Ukraine like Milosevic did in Serbia", *New Republic*, June 19, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/118260/putin-behaving-ukraine-milosevic-did-serbia>.

Serbs) from their supposedly “fascist” oppressors (West Ukrainian “Banderites” and Croats).

However, the most striking parallel to Putin’s actions in the Ukraine comes from the truly fascist state of Nazi Germany in 1938, when Hitler carved up Czechoslovakia on the pretence of rescuing the Sudeten Germans from their Czech oppressors. Nor is this the only similarity between the regimes of Putin and Hitler.⁷² These similarities are the result not only of the general close similarity between the “twin totalitarianisms” of communism and fascism, but also of the fact that Russia never underwent a “decommunization” programme in 1991 comparable to that undergone by Germany in 1945.

Indeed, a good way of seeing how little modern Russia has been truly “decommunized” is to imagine that Germany in 1945 had not been thoroughly crushed militarily and “denazified” politically and culturally, but had been allowed to develop in the way that Russia has been allowed to develop under Putin. According to this imagined scenario, Germany was allowed to retain almost all its Nazis cadres with no trial of any Nazi war criminals. Some changes had been made in its political system, but the SS remained in place and the Nazi party continued in existence and continued to do well in the polls with many members in the Reichstag. The party seemed to be on excellent terms with the president, and its leader was given awards by the official church, which remained pro-Nazi and was headed by a member of the SS. The army had been much reduced, but vast sums were being poured into its modernization, including the latest weapons of mass destruction, and the swastika had been restored. One neighbouring country had been invaded by the Wehrmacht, and another had been undermined by Nazi propaganda and undercover agents, together with large shipments of tanks and artillery. The Jews were again being reviled in public, and the West was being threatened with nuclear annihilation on television. Hitler’s Berlin bunker, over which a mausoleum had been constructed, was greatly honoured and his military victories were being feted and his political repressions and murders justified. A cult of personality of the new leader was being encouraged, a modernized version of the Hitler youth movement had been started, and genetically pure Aryan boys and girls were being encouraged to get together and bear children for the Reich. One female member of parliament even suggested that “material” from the genius leader should be sent to women around the country so that they could give birth to his genius offspring.⁷³ Journalists and political opponents were being killed, and anti-Nazi churches were being deprived of their property on various quasi-legal excuses. A close relationship existed between the government and organized crime, corruption was at all-time record levels, and Germany was at the top of the list on various indices of social

⁷² Igor Eidman, “Россия Ельцина-Путина повторяет историю Германии 1918–1938 годов”, *Fakeoff*, May 14, 2015, <http://fakeoff.org/politics/rossiya-eltsina-putina-povtoryaet-istoriyu-germanii-1918-1938-godov>.

⁷³ Мизулина предлагает россиянкам рожать от Путина, получая «материал» почтой, - СМИ”, October 6, 2014, <http://www.trust.ua/news/101335-mizulina-predlagaet-rossiyankam-rozhat-ot-putina-poluchaya-material-pochtoj---smi.html>

degeneration (abortion, drug-dealing, child mortality, suicide, etc.) issued by the United Nations.⁷⁴

If this were happening in Germany today, we can imagine the uproar, the calls from all sides to uproot the neo-Nazi menace. But although something very similar is happening in Russia today in reality and not in imagination, the response of the world has been much more muted. There are few who see this as a resurrection of Leninism or Sovietism, although this is clearly what is happening in fact...

Although the Soviet victory over fascism in 1945 is now celebrated as the greatest festival on the Russian Federation's calendar, and any criticism of the Red Army's (extremely cruel) conquest of the Third Reich is now a criminal offence, the most striking aspect of today's Russia is what can only be called its *fascism*. Of course, Putin accuses the Ukrainian regime of being fascist. But as so often with totalitarian regimes (whether fascist or communist), the truth is the exact opposite of the propaganda: Russia is now what it accuses Ukraine of being - a fascist state in all but name.

Moreover, it is Fascism tinged with the most abominable *blasphemy*: KGB Patriarch Cyril Gundiaev (codename "Mikhailov") declared in 2009 that the atheist Red Army's victory in 1945 was not only holy, but also that Stalin had thereby redeemed all the sins of the 1930s and had even "trampled down death by death" ...⁷⁵

One of the clearest proofs that Russia is returning to Sovietism is in the use of Soviet symbolism. Already in the early years of Putin's reign the Red Army was given back its red flag and Soviet anthem (the music, if not the words), and "ecclesiastical Stalinism" in the former of icons of Stalin and hagiographies of the great leader became commonplace. More recently, and especially since the invasion of the Crimea, statues of Lenin have been re-erected, and the hammer-and-sickle and other communist symbolism again feature in many places (even in conjunction with the Cross of Christ!).

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The contrast with Ukraine is striking. From 1991 until 2014, in spite of abortive attempts to free itself from its Soviet past, such as the 2004 "Orange" revolution, Ukraine remained in the grip of the Russian KGB, which did not hesitate to use force in order to impose its will on its satellite and retain its control over Ukraine's army and secret services.⁷⁶ However, when the last Putin-style bandit President, Yanukovich, was ejected by the popular rebellion

⁷⁴ Andrei Movchan, Россия и Запад: кто моральнее? http://slon.ru/russia/rossiya_i_zapad_kto_moralnee-1114248.xhtml, June 17, 2014.

⁷⁵ Vladimir Moss, "1945 год и 'богословие победы' в Московской патриархии", <https://www.academia.edu/>

⁷⁶ Андрей Илларионов, "Боевой путь ФСБ в Украине", Online Kiev, June 10, 2014, <http://kiev-online.net.ua/politika/andrei-illarionov-boevoi-put-fsb-v-ukrai.html>

of Euromaidan in February, 2014, a remarkable transformation began to take place. Statues of Lenin were torn down all over the country, genuine elections were held, and most recently and significantly the President Poroshenko and the Ukrainian parliament have passed legislation whose aim is the final decommunization of Ukraine.⁷⁷

The legislation consists of four bills. The first acknowledges a long list of movements and organizations that fought for a Ukraine independent of the Soviets. The “taboo” on these organizations is now lifted, and their deeds can be openly and freely analyzed by historians and others without fear of reprisals. The second bill opens the secret police archives, thereby making possible impartial historiography and the prosecution of communist criminals. The third bill says that Second World War began in 1939 with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, rather than in 1941 with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. The fourth bill prohibits the “propaganda of the Communist and/or National Socialist totalitarian regimes” in Ukraine. “In addition,” writes Alexander Motyl, “to advocating the removal of Communist monuments and public symbols and the renaming of streets and cities, the bill attempts to distinguish between materials that promote Communist and Nazi regimes, which is prohibited, and those that express pro-regime views, which would not be deemed illegal... The assumption underlying the [four] bills is that since communism and Nazism were equally evil ideologies, condemnation of one necessarily entails, both logically and morally, condemnation of the other. If de-Nazification is crucial, so too is decommunization.”⁷⁸

Of course, legislation is one thing, and its full implementation is another. And it must be admitted that Ukraine is only just beginning to free itself from the corruption of its Soviet past. In particular, there is evidence that the Russian KGB still has strong influence in the Ukrainian armed forces.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, these bills are precisely the kind of legislation that provides proof that a country is serious about decommunizing itself.

Russia, in stark contrast with Ukraine, has not only not started to decommunize herself in this way: she is actively “re-communizing” herself. And it is precisely this fact that, at a deeper psychological level, motivates many Russians (but by no means all) to hate the Ukraine, as Cain hated Abel. As Sergei Yekelchuk writes: “The Ukrainian revolution of 2014 threatens the ideology of Putin’s regime. It questions Russia’s identity. It challenges Russia’s plan to restore its influence in the region. It also shows that a Putinite regime can be destroyed by a popular revolution. No wonder Russia has recalled its

⁷⁷ “Порошенко подписал законы о декоммунизации Украины”, March 20, 2015, http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/news/2015/05/15/n_7199737.shtml.

⁷⁸ Alexander J. Motyl, “Kiev’s Purge. Behind the New Legislation to Decommunize Ukraine”, *Foreign Affairs*, April 28, 2015.

⁷⁹ Matthew Fisher, “Russian infiltration of Ukrainian military complicates Canadian training mission”, *National Post*, April 14, 2015, <http://www.nationalpost.com/m/wp/blog.html?b=news.nationalpost.com%2F%2Fnews%2Fworld%2Frussian-infiltration-of-ukrainian-military-complicates-canadian-training-mission>.

ambassador from Ukraine and refuses to recognize the country's new government..."⁸⁰

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There are some aspects of Soviet history that have not yet repeated themselves during Putin's reign. One of these is the large-scale imprisoning of dissidents in the Gulag (although large extra prisons are being built). Another is the open persecution of the Orthodox Faith (although True Orthodox (that is, anti-Soviet) Christians get no favours from this government). However, the fact that not all the aspects of Leninism have been restored is small comfort when so much *is* being restored. Just as cancer remains dangerous and life-threatening even when only a few cancerous cells remain in the body, so the present incipient recommunization can quickly develop into something that threatens the whole world. As Metropolitan Anastasy, first-hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad, wrote in 1938: "There is nothing more dangerous than if Russia were to want to assimilate anything from the sad inheritance left by degenerate Bolshevism: everything that its corrupting atheist hand has touched threatens to infect us again with the old leprosy."

The metropolitan's words have proved to be prophetic. When the Soviet Union fell in 1991, there were many who rejoiced in the supposed fall of Bolshevism. But there was no root-and-branch purge, and so communism has revived. Above all, Lenin still lies in the mausoleum, enjoying that immunity from prosecution (and corruption) that only Egyptian Pharaohs and Roman Popes enjoy.

Before the revolution, St. John of Kronstadt said that Russia without the tsar would be "a stinking corpse". The corpse of Soviet Russia continues to stink. And nobody in power is trying to take it out of the room...

*May 7/20, 2015.
Apodosis of Pascha.*

⁸⁰ Yekelchik, "In Ukraine, Lenin finally falls", WPOpinions, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/in-ukraine-lenin-finally-falls/2014/02/28/a6ab2a8e-9f0c-11e3-9ba6-800d1192d08b_story.html

10. THE ORIGINS OF SEXUAL PERVERSION

There is no limit, no bottom to the abyss of carnal pleasures. Today – this far, tomorrow – further, and so on to loss of consciousness, to self-annihilation.
Archpriest Lev Lebedev.

In the sixth chapter of Genesis, we read the extraordinary story of how the “sons of God” (“angels” is the word in the original text of the Alexandrian Bible) seduced the “daughters of men”; from these unlawful unions came “giants”. Then there came the universal Flood which swept away the whole of mankind except Noah and his family. Much remains unclear about this story. And it is not indicated whether or not there is a direct causal connection between the unlawful unions and the Flood of Noah. But their close proximity is very suggestive...⁸¹

The Apostle Jude appears refer to this story, linking it with the sexual perversions of Sodom and Gomorrah: “The angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgement of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities round about in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 6-7). The Apostle Peter has a very similar passage in his second epistle (2.4-6).

The Lord Himself compared the period before the Flood to the period before His Second Coming. Both periods are marked by a sinister combination of apparent normality with profound abnormality: “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all” (Luke 17.26-27). The period we are living through now is very similar. Now, as then, men have begun to multiply on the earth, and now, as then, the condition of mankind, while relatively peaceful, is profoundly sinful, being manifested above all in the spread of *sexual perversions* of all kinds.

Sexual perversion may be defined as the diversion of sexual desire from a *person* of the opposite sex to a *body* of the opposite sex (rape, sadomasochism, paedophilia), or to a person of the *same* sex (homosexuality, paedophilia), or to an *animal* (bestiality), or to an inanimate *thing* (fetishism). Since perversions are unnatural, the penance for them is more severe than for fornication – but the same as for adultery. Thus the penance for adultery, sodomy and bestiality is fifteen years without communion, while for fornication it is seven years.⁸²

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⁸¹ For a more detailed discussion of this story, see V. Moss, “Genetics and the Birth of the Antichrist”, www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com, the “Articles” section.

⁸² St. Basil the Great, *Canons* 58, 59, 62, 63.

However, before we discuss perversions as such, let us establish what is natural and what is not natural, perverted and unperverted, in man's sexual nature.

Now the contemporary perverts and their champions argue that the sexual distinctions are not important and therefore can be "renegotiated". However, according to the Holy Scriptures, the distinction – and the attraction – between male and female was there from the very beginning, even before the fall. When Eve was created out of the side of Adam, he said of her: "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: and she shall be called woman [*isha* in Hebrew] because she was taken out of man [*ish*]"⁸³. Here he is acknowledging that they are of one flesh – in other words, that they are *married – physically married*. These words, as Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes, are "the foundation of, and the reason for, the mysterious attraction and union between man and woman".⁸⁴ They "have become," writes St. Asterius of Amasea, "a common admission, spoken in the name of all men to all women, to the whole female sex. These words bind all the rest. For that which took place in the beginning in these first-created ones passed into the nature of their descendants."⁸⁵ "This is the origin," writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, "of the irresistible attraction of man to his 'wife' (the woman) as to the most necessary complement of his own nature. Union in love with the woman can be replaced only by union in love with God, which is immeasurably more profound. It is on such a union with God that monasticism is founded, which is why it does not lead to psychological complexes. But monasticism is not for everyone, it is the lot of special people, 'who can accommodate' this condition (Matthew 19.11-12). But for the majority the woman remains one of the most necessary conditions of a normal existence."⁸⁶

Adam continues with the famous words which the Lord Jesus Christ, followed by the Apostle Paul, saw as the founding document of marriage: *Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be in one flesh.*

Now it may be true, as St. Gregory of Nyssa argues, that the whole apparatus of sexual anatomical differences and sexual reproduction, being aspects of "the garments of skin" given to Adam and Eve after their fall, only came into being after the fall. If that is so, then sexual intercourse took place, as St. John of the Ladder points out, only after the fall, and could not have taken place in Paradise. But the fact remains that Adam was a man and Eve a woman already in Paradise, that they were married and of one flesh already in Paradise, and that even then they were attracted to each other in a natural, but sinless, unfallen manner. Thus St. Cyril of

⁸³ The Hebrew words "ish" and "isha" (like the English "man" and "woman") emphasize the unity of the sexes in a single human nature. For "this name," as St. John Chrysostom says, "should reveal their common creation and become the foundation of a durable love and the cement of their union" (*Homily 6 on Genesis*, 5).

⁸⁴ Velimirovich, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, volume IV, p. 241, November 25.

⁸⁵ St. Asterius, *Sermon on Matthew 19.3*, P.G. 40:228; in S.V. Troitsky, "Brak i Tserkov'" ("Marriage and the Church"), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1986 (III), № 35, pp. 25-26.

⁸⁶ Lebedev, "O masterakh i margaritakh" ("On Masters and Margaritas"), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 53, № 5 (640), May, 2003, p. 31.

Alexandria writes of Adam's body *before* the fall that it "was not entirely free from concupiscence of the flesh".⁸⁷ For "while it was beyond corruption, it had indeed innate appetites, appetites for food and procreation. But the amazing thing was that his mind was not tyrannized by these tendencies. For he did freely what he wanted to do, seeing that his flesh was not yet subject to the passions consequent upon corruption."⁸⁸

Now the Lord said that in the resurrection there will be no marrying, but that men and women will be like the angels. Granted: but does that mean the Lord Himself will no longer be a man, nor the Mother of God a woman? This seems profoundly counter to Christian intuition. Christ was born as a man of the male sex. And He has not ceased to be male since the resurrection. It may be that since there will be no marrying in the resurrection, but we shall be like the angels in heaven, we shall then have no secondary sexual characteristics, insofar as the need to continue the race through sexual reproduction will have disappeared. However, it runs counter to the intuition of Christians to argue that we will cease to be men and women in *any* significant sense. Rather, we see in Christ and the Virgin Mary, the new Adam and Eve, a real man and a real woman with no tendency towards "unisex"; indeed, they are the eternal types of real manliness and real femininity. There is therefore no reason to believe that the *primary, essential* differences between men and women will disappear in the resurrection.

Thus St. Jerome, in spite of his highly rigorist attitude to sexuality in general, insists that sexual differentiation will remain: "When it is said that they neither marry nor are given in marriage, the distinction of sex is shown to persist. For no one says of things which have no capacity for marriage, such as a stick or a stone, that they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but this may well be said of those who, while they can marry, yet abstain from doing so by their own virtue and by the grace of Christ. But if you will cavil at this and say, how shall we in that case be like the angels with whom there is neither male nor female, hear my answer in brief as follows. What the Lord promises is not the nature of angels, but their mode of life and their bliss. And therefore John the Baptist was called an angel even before he was beheaded, and all God's holy men and virgins manifest in themselves, even in this world, the life of angels. When it is said: 'Ye shall be like the angels', likeness only is promised and not a change of nature."⁸⁹

Now science has established that the intellectual and emotional differences between men and women may be related to hormonal differences and to different patterns of activity in the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Indeed, these hemispherical differences appear to complement each other rather like male and female.⁹⁰ It is as if each individual man and woman were one half of a single bisexual organism, so that each man appears to be "missing" certain feminine

⁸⁷ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On I Corinthians 7*; quoted in Walter Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria*, Woodstock, Maryland: Woodstock College Press, 1957, p. 98.

⁸⁸ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian*, 3, P.G. 76, 637; quoted in Burghardt, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

⁸⁹ St. Jerome, *Letter 108*, 23.

⁹⁰ Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference: Men, Women and the Extreme Male Brain*, London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2003.

qualities that would make him more whole, while each woman appears to be missing certain masculine qualities that would make her more whole.⁹¹

Be that as it may, and whether or not such differences existed before the fall, the fall has accentuated and corrupted the differences between the sexes. Thus men tend to be crude, insensitive and boastful, and women – weak-willed, vain and easily led by all kinds of influences. But these fallen differences do not entail that in the beginning, before the fall, there was never meant to be *any* real and important difference. The restoration of the image of God in man involves, not the abolition of all sexual differences, but their return to their unfallen condition, not the abolition of sexuality but sexual *integration*. Thus men return to real masculinity together with those feminine qualities which fallen masculinity drives out; and vice-versa for women.

Again, modern medicine claims to be able to change men into women, and women into men. But sex-change operations appear to be far less successful than is commonly claimed.⁹² Dr. Paul R. McHugh, the former psychiatrist-in-chief for [Johns Hopkins Hospital](http://www.hopkins.edu) and its current Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry, said that transgenderism is a “mental disorder” that merits treatment, that sex change is “biologically impossible,” and that people who promote sexual reassignment surgery are collaborating with and promoting a mental disorder.⁹³ And the reason for that seems to be that while you can (up to a point) change a man’s (or a woman’s) *secondary, external* secondary characteristics, you cannot change his *primary, internal* sexuality. For sexuality is not as superficial and “negotiable” as the modernists would like us to believe. There is more to sexuality than meets the eye...

The deeper aspects of sexuality, even on the purely physical plane, appear to be immutable.⁹⁴ Thus the male has an X and a Y chromosome, while the female has two X chromosomes – a fact of our sexual nature that can in no way be changed. As a scientific journalist writes: “Although men and women sometimes act like separate species, scientists have long assumed that – in terms of their DNA – they are more or less the same. But a new study has shown that the sexes really are quite different, reports *Nature* magazine, and it all comes down to the X chromosome.

⁹¹ Intriguing, in this connection, is the following remark of Clement of Alexandria: “This, then, is the mark of the man, the beard, by which he is seen to be a man, is older than Eve, and is the token of the superior nature. In this God deemed it right that he should excel, and dispersed hair over man’s whole body. Whatever smoothness and softness was in him He abstracted from his side when He formed the woman Eve,... while he (for he had parted with all his smoothness) remained a man, and shows himself a man.” (*The Instructor*, III, 3) The inference is that Adam was of the male sex before, as after, the creation of Eve. However, Clement also seems to be implying that he lost certain of his more feminine attributes (here, his smoothness) and so was more masculine after than before her creation.

⁹² Walt Heyer, “‘Sex change’ Surgery: What Bruce Jenner, Diane Sawyer, and you should Know”, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/78949.htm>, April 27, 2015.

⁹³ Michael W. Chapman, “Johns Hopkins Psychiatrist: Transgender is ‘Mental Disorder;’ Sex Change ‘Biologically Impossible’”, *cnsnews.com*, June 2, 2015. Cf. “The Transgender Tipping Point: America’s Next Civil Rights Frontier”, *Time Magazine*, June 9, 2104.

⁹⁴ Cf. Dorothy Kimura, “Sex Differences in the Brain”, *Scientific American*, vol. 267, September, 1992, pp. 80-87.

Women carry two X chromosomes; men, by contrast, have one X, inherited from their mothers, and one Y. The Y is an 'eroded' version of the X chromosome with fewer than 100 working genes. The X, by contrast, has more than 1000, and is able to deploy them more intricately. "Because women have two X chromosomes, one is inactive. But that doesn't mean it's entirely silent. The new research has revealed that up to 25 % of genes in the so-called inactive chromosome are actually switched on. In other words, women are getting 'double doses' of some genes. 'The effect of these genes from the inactive X chromosome could explain some of the differences between men and women that are not attributable to sex hormones,' said Laura Carrel of Pennsylvania State University. These could include emotional, behavioural and physical differences, including susceptibility to disease. Although the X contains only 4% of all human genes, it accounts for almost 10% of those inherited diseases that are caused by a single gene. These 'X-lined' disorders include colour blindness, haemophilia, various forms of mental retardation and Duchenne muscular dystrophy. With no 'spare' X to make up for genetic deficiencies, men are more vulnerable to 'X-linked' conditions."⁹⁵

Thus the scientific evidence, taken as a whole, gives some support to St. Gregory's view that secondary sexual characteristics were "added" to the original man after the fall. And since there will be no marriage in the resurrection, it follows, as St. Gregory writes, that these secondary characteristics will not exist in the Kingdom: "If the organs of marriage exist for the sake of marriage, when that function does not exist we shall need none of the organs for that function".⁹⁶ But the evidence also supports the position that there appears to be a deeper, primary level of sexuality that is "wired into" the brain and cannot be removed or changed, from which it follows that the attempt to remove or reverse or "renegotiate" sexuality is unnatural and perverse...

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Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes: "*Individual* people can hold themselves back at certain levels of this abyss, but as a *tendency* in the life of society it has no end. Just as society's *permissiveness* or *debauchery* in the present world of various 'pleasures' has no limit. If, 40-50 years ago, one had said that male homosexuals or female lesbians would be officially registered as 'conjugal' pairs, then the reply would not even have been horror, but rather a friendly laugh. However, that is the reality *now!* In a series of western countries they are officially *registered* and '*crowned*'. What next? Perhaps there will follow a *recognition* of bestiality as one of the forms of 'refined and elegant' sex? And then?... 'Progress' is 'progress' because it strives for infinity...

"According to the just formulation of F.M. Dostoyevsky, 'if God does not exist, then *everything* (!) is permitted'. In fact, if God does not exist, then the holiest 'holy

⁹⁵ "The Difference between Men and Women", *This Week*, March 26, 2005, p. 17.

⁹⁶ St. Gregory, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, 10. However, Hieromonk Seraphim Rose writes that "Adam and Eve were created, like the whole of the first creation, in the bloom of youth and beauty, and already possessing the sexual distinction that would be needed in their fallen nature" (*Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000, p. 187)

thing', the idol of the *highest value* in existence is undoubtedly '*pleasure*'. Whatever it may consist of and for whoever it may be. If!

"But if God does exist? Then what? Then it is necessary to know *what* laws He placed in the nature of man and what man is 'prescribed' to do, what not, and *why*...

"But who is now trying to 'free' men from the commandments of God and 'allow' them the cult of 'pleasure'? The medieval (and *contemporary*!) Templars represent 'him' in the form of a *goat with a woman's torso*, sitting on the earth's globe, with a five-pointed star on his goat's forehead, and between his horns a torch, a symbol of 'enlightenment', 'reason'. On one hand is written: 'free', and on the other 'permit'. He is called 'Baphomet'. He is an idol, one of the representations of the devil (Lucifer). He whispers into the ears of his worshippers the idea that he is 'god', but he lies, as always. He is a fallen creature of God and will be punished with eternal torments, where he will with special 'pleasure' mock those who, at his suggestion, serve 'pleasure' as an idol. But before that before the Second Coming of Christ, he will try to establish his dominion over the whole world with the help of his 'son' – the Antichrist. But he, in his turn, in order to gain dominion over men, will, among other methods, particularly strongly use *sex*. For *sex*, which turns people into voluntary animals, makes their manipulation very much easier, that is, it destroys the primordial structure of mankind, the nation and the state – the correct *family*, thereby as it were annihilating the 'image of God' in mankind."⁹⁷

If we try and go deeper into the nature of this self-destructive tendency of modern society we come to concept of *self-love* (Greek: φιλαυτία), which, though spiritual in essence, is closely linked to the carnal sin of lust, in that the latter represents a corruption and redirection of man's natural erotic feeling from the other to the self. The passionless delight *in* the other becomes a passionate desire *for* the other; "flesh of my flesh" becomes "flesh *for* my flesh". As such, it is a devouring, egocentric force, the very opposite of love. Self-love is at the root, not only of lust, but also of all forms of perversion, insofar as perversion involves the utilization of another, who (or which) is seen as no more than an instrument for one's pleasure (or pain). For perversion rejects a fully mutual personal relationship of love in favour of an impersonal relationship of use (or rather: abuse).

As St. Maximus the Confessor teaches, in Hans Balthasar's interpretation of his thought: "Two elements come together in the concept of φιλαυτία, which is the essential fault: egoism and carnal voluptuousness. To sin is to say no to the authority of God, it is 'to wish to be a being-for-oneself', and in consequence, for man it is to slide towards sensual pleasure. But in this double element there also lies hidden an internal contradiction of the sin which manifests itself immediately as its immanent chastisement. In sensual pleasure, the spirit seeks an egoistical substitute for its abandonment of God. But this abandonment itself isolates it egoistically instead of uniting it to the beloved. Voluptuousness 'divides into a

⁹⁷ Lebedev, "'Seksual'noe obrazovanie'" ("Sexual Education"), *Russkij Pastyr'* (Russian Pastor), № 24, I-1996, pp. 86-87, 90-91.

thousand pieces the unity of nature, and we who take part in this voluptuousness tear each other apart like ferocious beasts’.

“Φιλαντια has even torn apart the one God into a multitude of idols as it has torn nature, and ‘to obtain a little more pleasure, it excites us against each other like animals’. This ‘deceiving and pernicious love’, this ‘cunning and tortuous voluptuousness’ ends by pitting our flesh: ‘the flesh of every man is a valley pitted and gnawed by the continuous waves of the passions’ and ends ‘in the disgust which overthrows the whole of this first affection’.”⁹⁸

There are many illustrations of the ferocious and deadly power of this fallen sexuality in the Old Testament. Thus we have the story of the Levite’s concubine, whose body he cut up in twelve pieces, literally “dividing the unity of nature into pieces” (Judges 19). Again, “the overthrow of the first affection” is illustrated by the story of the incestuous rape of David’s daughter by his first-born son Amnon. The sacred writer says that Amnon loved Themar and “was distressed even unto sickness” because of her. And yet, having raped her, “Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her” (II Kings 13.1,2,15).

For, writes St. Maximus, “the torment of suffering is intimately mixed with pleasure, even when it seems to be snuffed out by the violence of the impassioned pleasure of those who are possessed by it”. “Nature punishes those who seek to do violence to her to the extent that they deliver themselves to a way of life contrary to nature; they no longer have at their disposal all the forces of nature such as she had given to them originally; so here they are diminished in their integrity and thus chastised.” “Wishing to flee the painful sensation of grief, we hurl ourselves towards pleasure... and in forcing ourselves to soothe the wounds of grief by pleasure, we thereby confirm still more the sentence directed against themselves. For it is impossible to find a pleasure to which pain and grief are not attached.”⁹⁹ “Man acquired an impulse to pleasure as a whole and an aversion to pain as a whole. He fought with all his strength to attain the one and struggled with all his might to avoid the other, thinking that in this way he could keep the two apart from each other, and that he could possess only the pleasure that is linked to self-love and be entirely without experience of pain, which was impossible. For he did not realize... that pleasure can never be received without pain; the distress caused by pain is contained within pleasure.”¹⁰⁰

This intimate connection between pleasure and pain means that perhaps the most characteristic of all the sexual perversions is sado-masochism. For here, as the philosopher Roger Scruton points out, “there is frequently an aspect of punishment: the sadist’s punishment of the other for failing to return his desire or

⁹⁸ Balthasar, *Liturgie Cosmique: Maxime le Confesseur* (Cosmic Liturgy: Maximus the Confessor), Paris: Aubier, 1946, pp. 142-143. Cf. St. Maximus: “The more human nature sought to preserve itself through sexual procreation, the more tightly it bound itself to the law of sin, reactivating the transgression connected with the liability to passions” (*Questions to Thalassius* 21).

⁹⁹ St. Maximus, in Balthasar, *op. cit.* pp. 143-143.

¹⁰⁰ St. Maximus, *Questions to Thalassius*, P.G. 90: 256A.

for failing to play sincerely the role that the sadist has devised for him; the masochist's desire for punishment, which relieves him of the burden of a culpable desire. The masochist may indeed receive the strokes of the whip as a kind of 'permission' - a reassurance that he is paying her and now for his sexual transgression, and that the claims of conscience have been satisfied."¹⁰¹

However, the most widespread perversion is homosexuality... The men of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, writes the Apostle Jude, because they went after "strange flesh" - that is, not flesh of the opposite sex, which would be natural, but flesh of the same sex, which is indeed "strange". Therefore they "are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

St. Paul sees the cause of homosexuality in the worship of the creature instead of the Creator, of which modern naturalism is another form: "When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust (ορφεξει) one towards another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet..." (Romans 1.21-26).

St. John Chrysostom comments: "Here he sets the pleasure according to nature, which they would have enjoyed with more sense of security and greater joy, and so have been far removed from shameful deeds. But they would not; which is why they are quite beyond the pale of pardon, and have insulted nature itself. And still more disgraceful than these is the women seeking these couplings, for they ought to have more sense of shame than men.... Then, having reproached the women first, he goes on to the men also, and says, 'And likewise also the men leaving the natural use of the woman' This is clear proof of the ultimate degree of corruption, when both sexes are abandoned. Both he who was called to be the instructor of the woman and she who was told to become a help like the man now behave as enemies to one another. Notice how deliberately Paul measures his words. For he does not

¹⁰¹ Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, London: Phoenix, 1994, p. 303. C.S. Lewis writes similarly of "a certain attitude which Venus, in her intensity, evokes from most (I believe, not all) pairs of lovers. This act can invite the man to an extreme, though short-lived, masterfulness, to the dominance of a conqueror or a captor, and the woman to a correspondingly extreme abjection and surrender. Hence the roughness, even fierceness, of some erotic play; the 'lover's pinch which hurts and is desired'. How should a sane couple think of this? Or a Christian couple permit it?" (*The Four Loves*, London: Collins, 1960, 2012, p. 125)

say that they loved and desired (ηρασθησαν και επεθυμησαν) each other but that 'they burned in their lust (εξεκαυθησαν εν τη ορεξει) for one another'! You see that the whole of desire (επιθυμιας) comes from an excess which cannot contain itself within its proper limits. For everything which transgresses God's appointed laws lusts after monstrous things which are not normal. For just as many often abandon the desire for food and come to feed on earth and small stones, and others, possessed by excessive thirst, often long even for mire, so these also charged into this explosion of lawless love. But if you ask, where did this intensity of lust come from? [I answer:] it was from being abandoned by God. And why were they abandoned by God? Because of their lawlessness in abandoning Him: 'men with men working that which is unseemly'. Do not, he means, because you have heard that they burned, suppose that the evil was only in desire. For the greater part of it came from their luxuriousness, which also kindled their lust into flame.... And he called it not lust, but that which is unseemly, and that rightly. For they both dishonoured nature, and trampled on the laws. And see the great confusion which fell out on both sides. For not only was the head turned downwards but the feet too were turned upwards, and they became enemies to themselves and to one another....

"It was meet that the two should be one, I mean the woman and the man. For 'the two,' it says, 'shall be one flesh'. But this was effected by the desire for intercourse, which united the sexes to one another. This desire the devil first took away and then, having changed its direction, thereby divided the sexes from one another, and made the one to become two in opposition to the law of God. For it says, 'the two shall be one flesh'; but he divided the one flesh into two: here then is one war. Again, these same two parts he provoked to war both against themselves and against one another. For even women abused women, and not men only. And the men stood against one another, and against the female sex, as happens in a battle by night. So you see a second and third war, and a fourth and fifth. And there is also another, for beside what has been mentioned they also behaved lawlessly against nature itself. For when the devil saw that it is this desire that, principally, draws the sexes together, he was bent on cutting through the tie, so as to destroy the race, not only by their not copulating lawfully, but also by their being stirred up to war, and in sedition against one another."¹⁰²

Fr. Thomas Hopko writes: "An interpretation of this passage [Romans 1.21-29] that claims the apostle was right in forbidding acts 'contrary to nature', but was ignorant of the fact that many people are 'by nature' homosexual and therefore should act according to their God-given homosexuality, is unacceptable to Orthodox Christian faith. No one in Orthodox Christian tradition has ever interpreted this text in this way, nor can anyone do so, according to Orthodoxy, when they read the Bible as a whole. On the contrary, the biblical teaching is rather this: The fact that many people have sexual feelings and desires for persons of their own sex is among the most powerful proofs that human beings and life have been distorted by sin..."¹⁰³

¹⁰² St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 4 on Romans*.

¹⁰³ Hopko, *Christian Faith and Same-Sex Attraction*, Ben Lomond: Conciliar Press, 2006, p. 57.

Clearly, then, there is a difference in kind between natural heterosexual desire, fallen though it is, and unnatural homosexual desire. The one was implanted in nature by God from the beginning (as we have seen, according to St. Cyril of Alexandria, an uncorrupted form of sexual attraction was already present between Adam and Eve in paradise): the other is unnatural, and is incited by demonic forces outside human nature to which sinners give access through their idolatrous worship of creation. Like the demonic lust of “the sons of God” for the daughters of men in Genesis 6, homosexuality is a demonically inspired undermining of the natural order.

This is proved by the many cases in which people who have been led to think that they are homosexual, but return quickly and joyfully to the natural order once they have been freed from the unnatural power that controlled them. While supporters of homosexuality mock this evidence, it is actually very important in demonstrating that homosexuality is by no means natural. Thus Robert Epstein writes: “In a landmark study published in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* in October 2003, [Robert L.] Spitzer interviewed 200 men and women who once considered themselves homosexuals but who had lived their lives as heterosexuals for at least five years. Most of the participants had undergone some form of reorientation therapy. In addition to determining whether such therapy actually worked, Spitzer wanted to know just how dramatically people could alter their orientation. To his surprise, most of his subjects not only reported living long-term (more than 10 years) as heterosexuals, they also declared that they had experienced ‘changes in sexual attraction, fantasy and desire’ consistent with heterosexuality. The changes were clear for both sexes...”¹⁰⁴

A vivid example of such a “conversion” is the following true story related by the present writer’s wife, Mrs. Olga Moss. (The names of the people in the story have been changed.) “This took place some years after the war, after I had graduated from Amsterdam university, had married and was living in England with my first husband. I had a schoolfriend who was a real macho man, good at sport and so on. He had a younger brother called Pieter who was quite the opposite: tall and slim, with a sensitive nature, studying history in Leiden. Because of the sharp contrast with his brother, many of his student friends started to suggest to Pieter that he was a homosexual. And when he listened to them talking about falling in love, and how their pulses would race, and their heart would beat, at the sight of certain girls, Pieter, who had never experienced what they were describing, thought: ‘Maybe I am a homosexual’. As a result, he made himself vulnerable to the advances of other men, and entered into a relationship.

“He then wrote me a letter from Holland telling me his story, and said: ‘Maybe you don’t want to know me any more.’ I replied: ‘Of course I want to know you. But this is against the Law of God [Pieter was a believer], it is an abomination in His sight, and you must fight against it. We all suffer from various temptations and sins. But we must not give in to them, but must control them. We must not say:

¹⁰⁴ Robert Epstein, “Do Gays have a Choice?”, *Scientific American Mind*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2009, pp. 66-67.

“Because I’m made that way, I can act that way.” For example, if we are kleptomaniacs, we cannot just give in to the temptation to steal. And if we have a violent temper, we cannot just give in to our temper and be violent.’ Pieter fell into a depression, and went to his parents’ town to throw himself off a bridge near his parents’ home.

However, by Divine Providence, his father decided to go for a walk in that area, something he never normally did. Approaching the bridge, he recognized his son standing on the edge, as if he was about to throw himself in. He called out: ‘Pieter!’, Pieter stopped, and turning to his father, put his arms around him and sobbed: ‘I was about to commit suicide because I’m a homosexual.’ His father was deeply shocked; he took him home, but didn’t want to speak to his son again. Some time later, Pieter’s father was dying. Pieter was the only one of his three sons who was in Holland. He sat next to his bed in hospital, keeping watch. He fell asleep and had an extraordinary vision. He saw a great and evil angel trying to throw him onto the ground. Pieter struggled to free himself, knowing that it was essential that he did not fall. But this angel was far stronger than him. Suddenly, however, the angel let go. Pieter woke up and felt himself completely cured of his homosexuality. He bent over to his father to tell him the news, but his father had died...

“A little later, Pieter went to Ireland for his Ph.D. studies in history, and met a Spanish student called Pilar who was also working for her Ph.D. They fell in love. Returning to Holland via London airport, Pieter phoned me up at 5 in the morning to tell me excitedly: ‘Olga, Olga, I’ve fallen in love. My pulse is racing, my heart is fluttering. She’s beautiful, has lovely eyes and voice,’ etc., etc. I was very sleepy and could hardly take it all in. But I was very happy for him. A little later Pilar came to Holland – they were going to get engaged there and then get married in Spain. She was going to leave the Roman Catholic church, and he the Protestant church in order to join the Orthodox Church to which I belong. Then followed the happiest weeks of his life preparing for the engagement and wedding. She came over before Pascha, but unknown to us was carrying the Legionnaires’ disease, which she had caught in Spain. He was infected, and fell very ill on Great Friday. 24 hours later he was dead. The death was so rapid that an autopsy was ordered. It revealed that Pieter had been deficient in a certain sexual hormone. Pilar went back to Spain, and Pieter was buried next to his father...”¹⁰⁵

Although this story constitutes no more than anecdotal evidence, it strongly suggests three things: (1) that a low level of normal libido may make a man vulnerable to homosexuality even when he is in fact heterosexual; (2) that environmental influences – the suggestions of schoolfriends and peers – may also dispose a man to the sin if he does not actively resist them; but that (3) the main agent of homosexuality is *demonic*, the demon of homosexuality.

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¹⁰⁵ Mrs. Olga Moss, personal communication, 2014.

The idea that homosexuality has a biological base in human nature has been based mainly on the hypothesis that there is a “gay gene”. However, “no one has yet identified a particular gay gene,” writes Robert Kunzig.¹⁰⁶ And Jonathan Moseley says flatly: “Homosexuality has no genetic cause” – for the simple reason that “a [homosexual] gene that dramatically reduces one’s likelihood of having children would quickly become extinct.”¹⁰⁷ This is rather an obvious point. But liberals for some reason ignore it...

Linda Bowles puts it equally bluntly: “The truth is this: There is no ‘gay’ gene. The scientific search for a biological basis for homosexuality has been a complete failure. Highly touted studies, including the study of the brains of 35 male cadavers by Simon LeVay (1991) and the heralded study of 40 pairs of homosexual brothers by Dean Hamer (1993), have not stood up to rigorous scientific scrutiny.

“The widely respected Dr. Joel Gelertner of Yale University in an article in *Science* made this observation about various studies trying to link genes with complex human behavior. ‘All were announced with great fanfare; all were greeted unsceptically in the popular press; all are now in disrepute.’

“Studies of identical twins are especially revealing. Identical twins, unlike fraternal twins, have precisely the same genetic makeup. If same-sex orientation were genetically determined, one could expect identical twins to always have the same sexual orientation. Dozens of studies prove they do not. Almost all scientists who have studied human development agree that environmental influences and life experiences play a significant role in essentially all complex human behaviors, including sexual mindsets.

“The bottom line is this: No child is born to be a homosexual. Homosexuals are made, and they can be unmade. This is the truth that more psychiatrists and psychologists need to acknowledge. This is the truth that the American people need to know, parents of young children need to heed, and politicians need to understand.”¹⁰⁸

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“By their fruits ye shall know them”: that homosexuality is evil and unnatural is proved by its destructive fruits. Thus it is destructive from a *medical* point of view (because it spreads AIDS), from a *psychological* point of view (because it creates no stable, satisfying bonds), from a *demographic* point of view (because it brings down the birth-rate and makes societies older), from a *social* point of view (because it is divisive, dividing “straights” against “gays” and men against women), and from a *political* point of view (because it undermines the foundation of the State, which is

¹⁰⁶ Kunzig, “Finding the Switch”, *Psychology Today*, May 1, 2008, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200804/finding-the-switch>.

¹⁰⁷ Moseley, “Homosexuality has no Genetic Cause”, *Barbwire*, September 5, 2014, <http://barbwire.com/2014/09/05/homosexuality-genetic-cause/>

¹⁰⁸ Bowles, “New Study Shows Homosexuals can Change”, in *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October, 2001 (1509).

the family).

Let us look first at some of the psychological and social effects... “In their book *The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop*, David McWhirter and Andrew Mattison found that of the 156 couples they studied, 75 percent of the partners learned within five years that for the relationship to survive, cheating had to be tolerated, as long as one or the other did not become emotionally involved with the other sex partner. In her book *The Mendola Report*, lesbian Mary Mendola conducted a nationwide survey of approximately 400 homosexual couples. She, too, found that homosexuals distinguish between sexual and emotional exclusivity. Indeed, just 26 percent of homosexuals believe commitment is paramount in a marriage-type relationship. This translates to an almost unfathomable degree of sleeping around. A recent Amsterdam study found that men in homosexual relationships cheat with an average of eight partners a year. Others have found that the average homosexual has between 100 and 500 sexual partners over his or her lifetime. One study showed that 28 percent have had 1,000 or more sex partners, with another study placing the percentage between 10 and 16 percent. While adultery is certainly a factor in traditional marriages, it is comparatively rare. In fact, studies on matrimony place the male fidelity rate between 75 and 80 percent and that of females between 85 and 90 percent. The reason is simple: Unlike homosexual relationships, emotional and sexual fidelity within matrimony are inexorably linked and always have been by definition. To extend the concept of marriage to a situation wherein fidelity is not the norm would not only cheapen the institution, but it would have disastrous consequences for children. Simply put, a marriage is not a marriage without total exclusivity.”¹⁰⁹

Let us also look briefly at the *political* effects of homosexuality... A permissive attitude towards sodomy is not only a mortal sin in the eyes of God and has profoundly evil consequences for private and public morality and happiness: it is also incompatible with any understanding of *the State* that is based on the natural order. This is because the State is based on the family, and is designed to protect the family and its continuation and multiplication down the generations, whereas homosexuality, for obvious reasons, cuts short the timespan of the single-sex “family” to one generation. Therefore the State that legalizes homosexuality and discourages or downgrades natural, heterosexual marriage and childbirth will first undergo a process of rapid aging (this is already happening in many western societies), and then will eventually simply die out - unless it adopts unnatural, artificial (and often immoral) methods of acquiring children, such as kidnapping, accelerated immigration, genetic experimentation and surrogate motherhood.

Finally, Michael Hanby explores the *philosophical-anthropological* significance of the legalization of homosexuality and the new sexual technologies: “We must first understand that the sexual revolution is, at bottom, the technological revolution and its perpetual war against natural limits applied externally to the body and internally to our self-understanding. Just as feminism has as its practical

¹⁰⁹ *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October, 2001 (1509).

outworking, if not its theoretical core, the technological conquest of the female body – “biology is not destiny,” so the saying goes – so too same-sex marriage has as *its* condition of possibility the technological mastery of procreation, without which it would have remained permanently unimaginable.

“Opponents of same-sex marriage have not always perceived this clearly. They maintain that partisans of ‘marriage equality’ redefine marriage as an affective union which makes the birth and rearing of children incidental to its meaning, a result of the de-coupling of sex and procreation in the aftermath of The Pill. But this is only half true. Since married couples normally can and typically *do* have children, same-sex unions must retain in principle some form of the intrinsic connection between marriage, procreation and childrearing if they are really to be counted as marriage and to be truly ‘equal’ in the eyes of society and the law. This can only be done by technological means. And so the argument for marriage as an affective union has been buttressed time and again in the courts by the claim that assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), surrogacy, and the like eliminate any relevant difference between a married man and woman and a same-sex couple, from which it is but a short step to the conclusion that the state has an obligation to secure same-sex couples’ rights and access to these technologies as a condition of their genuine equality.

“Yet if this is true, it follows that no great weight attaches to natural motherhood and fatherhood and that being born to a father and mother is inessential to what it means to be human, or even to the meaning of childhood and family.

“To accept same-sex unions as ‘marriage’ is thus to commit officially to the proposition that there is no meaningful difference between a married man and woman conceiving a child naturally, two women conceiving a child with the aid of donor semen and IVF, or two men employing a surrogate to have a child together, though in the latter cases only one of the legally recognized parents can (presently) contribute to the child’s hereditary endowment and hope for a family resemblance. By recognizing same-sex ‘marriages’ the state also determines once and for all that ARTs are not merely a remedy for infertility but a normative form of reproduction equivalent to natural procreation, and indeed it has been suggested in some cases that ARTs are an *improvement* upon nature. Yet if this is true, it follows that no great weight attaches to natural motherhood and fatherhood and that being born to a father and mother is inessential to what it means to be human, or even to the meaning of childhood and family. These are not fundamentally ‘natural’ phenomena integral to human identity and social welfare but mere accidents of biology overlaid with social conventions that can be replaced by ‘functionally equivalent’ roles without loss...”¹¹⁰

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¹¹⁰ Hanby, “The Brave New World of Same-Sex Marriage”, *The Federalist*, February 19, 2014. <http://thefederalist.com/2014/02/19/the-brave-new-world-of-same-sex-marriage>.

This leads us, finally, to consider perhaps the profoundest and most frightening aspect of the modern sexual revolution and its legitimization of sexual perversion: the loss of the concept of *fatherhood*, with the consequent loss of the concept of *God the Father*. In gay marriages, a child is brought up with two fathers and no mother, or with two mothers and no father. Apart from any other psychological disturbances this kind of deprivation – some would say: child molestation – may cause, one must be the loss of the concept of fatherhood and/or motherhood.

The Lord taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer to "Our Father", and He called Himself "the Son of God" and "the Son of Man". The whole Gospel is imbued with the love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father. And yet the central dogma of the Holy Trinity, the dogmas of the Incarnation, and the Life and Death of Christ in obedience to His Father, and finally the dogma of the adoption of Christians as sons of the Father in His Only-Begotten Son and of our holy Mother, the Church – all these become incomprehensible, or at least less vivid, less *real* for a person who has been brought up without real, natural family life – that is, with a biological father and a biological mother.

Just as the democratic revolution has weakened the consciousness of kingship and civil obedience in the people, so has the sexual revolution weakened the concept of fatherhood and sonship. Thus the sexual revolution not only destroys morality: it also destroys the Christian dogmatic consciousness... Therefore as Lot fled from the burning of Sodom, it is time for us to "flee to the mountains", to the saints and to the Kingdom on high. There we will find refuge and strength. For just as the Lord "delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)", so "the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgement" (II Peter 2.7-9).

May 23 / June 5, 2015.

11. THE MULTIVERSE THEORY

Of all the crazy ideas thought up by the wit of man, perhaps the most absurd is the new physical idea of the “multiverse”. Frank Close, professor of physics at Oxford University, explains that the idea of the “multiverse” – the existence of multiple universes – is, together with string theory, one of the “two leading theories that attempt to explain the most fundamental characteristics of the physical world”.¹¹¹ But Close readily admits that it has one or two problems...

The first is that it is *untestable* and *unfalsifiable*, which makes it, strictly speaking, *not science at all*. “As there is no possibility of communication between us and other universes, there is no empirical way to test the multiverse theory. George Ellis makes the point explicitly: ‘In a general multiverse model, everything that can happen will happen somewhere, so any data whatever can be accommodated. Hence it cannot be disproved by an observational test at all.’ By implication, the multiverse concept lies outside science.”¹¹²

So one of the two main mega-theories of contemporary physical science is not science at all. (Close thinks that the situation is a little better with the other mega-theory, string theory, but only just!) Physics was meant to exclude the need for metaphysics, untestable philosophy – but it seems that metaphysics is making a come-back!

And this is not the only problem. According to Close, the different universes of the “multiverse” can “implement different laws of physics”, with the consequence that “if such diverse regions of space exist, then the ‘universe’ as we’ve defined it is not the whole of reality.”¹¹³

“Ellis and his cosmologist colleague Joe Silk, a professor at the Université de Pierre et Marie Curie in Paris, call this ‘a kaleidoscopic multiverse comprising a myriad of universes’. They, as proxy for many physicists, then pose the basic challenge: the suggestion that another universe need not have the same fundamental constants of nature as ours inspires the question of what determines the values in our universe. Of the variety of universes that could exist, the conditions for the narrow range of parameters for which intelligent life could exist are trifling. The odds that we exist are therefore so vanishingly small, that multiverse theory claims that there is a ‘landscape’ of universes ‘out there’ in which all possible values of these parameters exist. Thus one universe will exist somewhere with conditions just right for life, and we are the proof...”¹¹⁴

This reveals what is perhaps the main motivation for multiverse theory *in physics*: to help out evolution theory *in biology* in what should be the very first

¹¹¹ Close, “The Limits of Knowledge”, *Prospect*, June, 2015, p. 64.

¹¹² Close, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹¹³ Close, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹¹⁴ Close, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

and easiest step in the ladder of evolution: *the origin of life*. The problem is that, as the physicist Close readily admits, – most biologists are much less sincere, – “the odds that we exist are vanishingly small” because the odds on the existence of all of the ten major constants that make life on earth possible (for example, the distance of the earth from the sun) are also “vanishingly small”. So in order to help out their biological colleagues in their little difficulty (of course, this is only the beginning of the vast difficulties faced by Darwinist theory), the physicists are forced to resort to the fantastical theory that all possible universes exist somewhere in the “multiverse” – including our own fantastically unlikely universe with its life-bearing planet, the Earth.

The Lord said that with God all things are possible. But He did not say that all possibilities will in fact become actual. In fact, He definitively excluded certain possibilities: for example, that falsehood should finally triumph over truth, or good over evil, or that the world will not be brought to an end by His Second Coming. God can do anything – except contradict His own all-holy will. It is His will that decrees which possibilities become reality, and which will never be fulfilled – in any universe.

The concept of *the will* – not only God’s will, but also man’s will – is crucial here. For what is an act of will if not the elimination of a range of possibilities in favour of *one reality*? As I write these words, I am making what I write, not just a possibility, but *reality*, while at the same time excluding all other possibilities from being actualized. Thus freedom to will this as opposed to that is the freedom to create reality out of mere possibility. As I write these words I am not simply banishing the things I am *not* writing to some other universe in which they exist on equal terms with what I *am* writing: I am excluding the very possibility of their being written anywhere – at any rate, at this point in my life.

If, on the other hand, I assert, as the multiverse theorists seem to be asserting, that I am writing an infinite number of other versions of this article in an infinite number of other universes, the very concept of “I”, of personal identity, seems to disappear. Physicists appear to have become reconciled to the idea – enormously paradoxical though it is – that a sub-atomic particle can exist in two places at the same time. But this paradox is as nothing by comparison with the idea there are an infinity of universes in which I write an infinite number of different versions of this article. Some of these alternative versions will be gibberish, or represent something completely different from what I actually believe. How, then, can they be said to be what *I* write? Will they not in fact be the products of completely different people? Indeed, if different universes comprise different possibilities that cannot communicate with each other, and which may obey completely different laws of nature, what basis is there for saying that the I who am writing this article in this universe am the same as any of the Is who are writing it in other universes?

Let us remind ourselves of the first difficulty Close finds in multiverse theory: that there is no empirical evidence for the existence any other universe than our own – that is, the one single concatenation of events in space and time

that all human beings with the exception of contemporary physicists consider to be *reality* and not mere possibility. Indeed, not only is there no empirical evidence for other universes: even theoretically there cannot be any such evidence. For if there were, it would show that those other universes were interacting with our own and therefore formed part of *our reality*. As for there being an *infinity* of other universes, this is even more out of the question. For as the German mathematician David Hilbert says: "Although infinity is needed to complete mathematics, it occurs nowhere in the physical universe."¹¹⁵

Scientists used to pride themselves on their hard-headedness, on their insistence on *facts*, facts that can be empirically seen, heard or touched. Now, however, they deal, not in facts, but in *possibilities*, infinite numbers of them, none of which is more real than any other. They have become other-worldly to the most extreme degree, indulging in fantasies about other universes no less real – or unreal – than our ours but with which we can have no communication and about which we can have no information whatsoever.

Truly the modern physicist echoes the words of Shakespeare's Prospero:

*Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.*

However, let us stop dreaming, wake up and face the reality: there is only one reality, one universe. We are real, our decisions are real, and the reward for our actions is real. We cannot escape from reality – and moral responsibility – by claiming that here is any other reality in any other world. The idea of multiple universes is an old one: we find it in Hinduism, and we find it in the dualistic religions of the Middle East. Just as the idea is old, so is its refutation – the Holy Fathers long ago rejected the idea of two universes, one ruled by a good God and the other by a bad one following different laws.

A famous modern apologist, C.S. Lewis, discerns in all forms of the dualistic (and by inference, multiverse) error two major difficulties, one metaphysical and the other moral. The metaphysical difficulty consists in the fact that neither of the two worlds "can claim to be the Ultimate. More ultimate than either of them is the inexplicable fact of there being there together. Neither of them chose this *tête-à-tête*. Each of them therefore is *conditioned* – finds [itself] willy nilly in

¹¹⁵ Hilbert, in Close, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

a situation; and either that situation itself, or some unknown force which produced that situation, is the real Ultimate. Dualism has not yet reached the ground of being. You cannot accept two conditioned and mutually independent beings as the self-grounded, self-comprehending Absolute." In trying to understand the dualistic multiverse in pictorial terms, we cannot avoid "smuggling in the idea of a common *space* in which they can be together, and thus confessing that we are not yet dealing with the source of the universe but only with two members contained in it. Dualism is a truncated philosophy."¹¹⁶

The moral difficulty is similar. It consists in the fact that if one universe has one system of values, which we from our point of view would call good, and the other a completely different, or contradictory one, which we would call bad, there is no basis on which to judge between the two. "In what sense can one party [or universe] be said to be right and the other wrong? If evil has the same kind of reality as good, the same autonomy and completeness, our allegiance to good becomes the arbitrarily chosen loyalty of a partisan. A sound theory of value demands something very different..."¹¹⁷

It does indeed. However, physicists do not generally concern themselves with moral questions, or the origins of morality; so one might argue that this consequence of their theory is irrelevant to physical truth. But this would be disingenuous; for physical, cosmological theories are so ambitious that they quite unashamedly claim to be "Theories of Everything" (TOEs). Everything is everything. You cannot claim to have a theory of everything if "everything" excludes life, consciousness, conscience, science, art and morality...

Not to mention God... But then we have come to expect that "theories of everything" would exclude God. The ironic thing is that in the brave new world of modern science in which everything that is remotely possible must be true in some universe or other, the possibility of God remains firmly excluded. The trouble is: it is not only in a moral, but also in a physical sense that modern man wishes to believe that "if God does not exist, everything is possible". The motive of modern scientists remains atheistic.¹¹⁸ Only the determination not to believe in God can explain how they would prefer the most fantastical of all theories to the knowledge of God... It is truly the fool that has said in his heart: there is no God.

¹¹⁶ Lewis, "Evil and God", in *Faith, Christianity and the Church*, London: HarperCollins, 2002, p. 94.

¹¹⁷ Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

¹¹⁸ The physicist Vladimir Trostnikov writes: "True, well-known scientists do not usually tolerate direct attacks against religion. But this cautiousness is explained, not by their wavering, but by a desire to serve the cause of atheism as effectively as possible. You know, people are always more likely to believe, not the man who gets heated and thereby betrays his partiality, but the man who gives the impression of being an impartial third party. It is precisely this role that our scientists take upon themselves. But their verdicts are always in favour of one side." ("The Role and Place of the Baptism of Rus' in the General European Spiritual Process of the Second Millenium of Christian History", *Orthodox Russia*, N 19 (1400), October 1/14, 1989 (in Russian)).

Science has obviously discovered many truths. But they are minor truths, almost trivialities. “The big picture”, the “everything”, has escaped it - totally.

As the holy Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, who had a thorough training in physics, mathematics and engineering, writes: “You ask what is my opinion of the human sciences? After the fall men began to need clothing and numerous other things that accompany our earthly wanderings; in a word, they began to need material development, the striving for which has become the distinguishing feature of our age. The sciences are the fruit of our fall, the production of our damaged fallen reason. Scholarship is the acquisition and retention of impressions and knowledge that have been stored up by men during the time of the life of the fallen world. Scholarship is a lamp by which ‘the gloom of darkness is guarded to the ages’. The Redeemer returned to men that lamp which was given to them at creation by the Creator, of which they were deprived because of their sinfulness. This lamp is the Holy Spirit, He is the Spirit of Truth, who teaches every truth, searches out the deep things of God, opens and explains mysteries, and also bestows material knowledge when that is necessary for the spiritual benefit of man. Scholarship is not properly speaking wisdom, but an opinion about wisdom. The knowledge of the Truth that was revealed to men by the Lord, access to which is only by faith, which is inaccessible for the fallen mind of man, is replaced in scholarship by guesses and presuppositions. The wisdom of this world, in which many pagans and atheists occupy honoured positions, is directly contrary according to its very origins with spiritual, Divine wisdom: it is impossible to be a follower of the one and the other at the same time; one must unfailingly be renounced. The fallen man is ‘falsehood’, and from his reasonings ‘science falsely so-called’ is composed, that form and collection of false concepts and knowledge that has only the appearance of reasons, but is in essence vacillation, madness, the raving of the mind infected with the deadly plague of sin and the fall. This infirmity of the mind is revealed in special fullness in the philosophical sciences...”¹¹⁹

There is only *one* world, but that world includes and is embraced by God. It is precisely the Kingdom that is not of this world that makes this world real; in God it lives and moves and has its being; through Him reality acquires its stubborn, tangible, ineluctable quality. He is the Absolute and Ultimate which makes any dualism or multiversism not only unnecessary but also definitely false. Unlike the mutually uncommunicating universes of the multiverse, He communicates with us, giving us “infallible proofs” (Acts 1.3) of His existence and of His goodness. “He gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17.25). He is “the Beginning of every beginning” (I Chronicles 29.12), and the End of every end. He is “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1.8). Amen.

June 1/14, 2015.

¹¹⁹ Bishop Ignatius, *Sochinienia (Works)*, volume 4, letter N 45 (in Russian).

St. Justin the Philosopher.

12. THE BREAD OF THE EUCHARIST

When the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches anathematized each other in 1054, the main subject of their quarrel was neither the Filioque nor the universal jurisdiction of the Papacy, although these major dogmatic questions did enter into the correspondence. The main subject of their quarrel was something which had not been a major bone of contention before, and did not become so again afterwards: the question whether the bread of the Eucharist should be leavened, as was the practice in the East, or unleavened, as in the West.

The fact that this issue was tacitly dropped in almost all subsequent ecumenical discussions is understandable; it was thought unnecessary and harmful to the common goal of the unity of the Churches to concentrate on a liturgical or ritual issue when major dogmatic questions remained unresolved; differences in rite were considered to be tolerable so long as dogmatic agreement could be attained.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, there is one major figure in Orthodox-Catholic relations who disagreed with this line of thinking: St. Mark of Ephesus. At the council of Florence in 1439 “he insisted in calling upon Latins to return to the standards of Orthodoxy by eliminating, among other things, their ‘dead sacrifice’ in unleavened bread.”¹²¹ In view of Mark’s irreproachable Orthodoxy and holiness in the eyes of the Orthodox, and the impossibility of accusing him of pettiness or legalism, it may be useful now, on the verge of a possible new and final “push for unity” between Orthodoxy and Papism, to examine once again the arguments on this issue.

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Let us begin by asking: what kind of bread did the Lord use at the Last Supper?

Our earliest witness, St. Paul, witnesses that the Lord “took bread”, that is, leavened bread, αρτος (I Corinthians 11.23, 26, 27). As for the three Synoptic Evangelists (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25 and Luke 22:19-20), Archbishop Averky (Taushev) of Jordanville writes: “All three describe this event in approximately the same way. The Lord ‘took’ the bread, blessed it, broke it and distributed it among the disciples, saying: ‘Take, eat; this is My Body.’ The word bread’ here is ‘artos [αρτος]’ in Greek, which means ‘raised bread’, bread that has been leavened on yeast, as opposed to ‘azymon [αζυμων]’, as the unleavened bread used by the Jews at Pascha was called. It must be assumed that such bread had been specially prepared on the Lord’s instructions, in order to establish the new Mystery. The significance of this bread lies in that it is as it

¹²⁰ For example, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann writes: “Almost all the Byzantine arguments against the Latin rites have long since become unimportant, and only the genuine dogmatic deviations of Rome have remained” (*The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961, p. 248).

¹²¹ Mahlon Smith III, *And Taking Bread: The Development of the Azyme Controversy*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1978, p. 25.

were alive, symbolizing life, as opposed to unleavened bread, which is dead."¹²²

The custom of using leavened bread at the Eucharist continued for many centuries in both East and West. Thus Rev. Richard Bingham writes: "The Ancients are wholly silent as to the use of unleavened bread in the Church. But they [i.e. the ancients] many times speak of leavened bread, and sometimes the Eucharist is called 'Fermentum', 'Leaven', upon that account. As appears from the Pontifical [i.e. *Liber Pontificalis*] in the Lives of Melchiades, and Siricius, and a Letter of Pope Innocent, where he says, it was the custom at Rome to Consecrate the Fermentum, (that is, the Eucharist) in the Mother Church and send it thence on the Lord's Day to the Presbyters in the Tituli, or lesser churches, that they might not think themselves separated from the Bishop's Communion. But they did not send it to any country parishes, because the Sacraments were not to be carried to places at any great distance. What is here called the Consecrated Fermentum, is by Baronius and other, who tread in the track of the Schoolmen [i.e. Scholastics], interpreted of the Eulogia, or Panis Benedictus, the bread that was blessed for such as did not communicate [i.e. the antidoron]. But Innocent plainly says, he meant it of the Sacrament, which was consecrated by the Bishop, and sent to the presbyters for the use of lesser church. Which shews, that at the time, even in Rome itself, the Eucharist was consecrated in common or leavened bread. It is observable, that neither Photius, nor any other Greek writer, before Michael Cerularius, A.D. 1051, ever objected to the use of unleavened bread to the Roman Church: which argues, that hte use of it did not prevail till about that time; else there is no doubt but Photius would among other things, have objected this to them. These arguments put the matter beyond all dispute, that the Church for a thousand years use no other but common or leavened bread in the Eucharist; and how the change was made or the time exactly when, is not easy to determine."¹²³

Peter, Patriarch of Antioch, explained the significance of the use of leavened bread in his correspondence with the Venetian Archbishop Dominic of Grado in 1052. Unleavened bread (αζυμα), he said, was prescribed for the Jews in remembrance of their hasty flight from Egypt, "so that, remembering the wonders that God had done among them, they would abide by His commandments and never forget His deeds. But the perfectly leavened loaf (ατρος) - which through the ritual is made into the undefiled Body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ - is given in remembrance of His dispensation in the flesh. 'For whenever you eat this loaf (ατρος) and drink this cup,' he says, 'you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes' (I Corinthians 11.26). Now notice, most holy brother-in-spirit, that in all these places a loaf (ατρος), and not matzo [unleavened bread, αζυμα], is proclaimed to be the Body of the Lord, because it is complete and full (ατριον). But matzo is dead and lifeless and in all

¹²² Averky, *Rukovodstvo k izucheniu Sviaschennago Pisania Novago Zaveta* (Guide to the Study of the Scriptures of the New Testament), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, part 1: The Four Gospels, 1974, 275.

¹²³ Bingham, *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Volume 1, Book XV, Oxford University Press, 1855, p. 738.

ways incomplete. But when the leaven is introduced into the wheaten dough, it becomes, as it were, living and substantial."¹²⁴

Therefore "the Latins were in error, Peter claimed, if they thought that the sacrament sealing the new covenant had been instituted in unleavened bread. For the azyme had been divinely designated under the old covenant to commemorate the Exodus, while the Evangelists expressly state that Jesus designated bread (αρτος) as his body. This was not an arbitrary choice, since the physical properties of the loaf (αρτος) made it a fitting symbol of life, and fulfillment, while matzos (αζυμα) bespoke deprivation. For, in lacking salt and leaven, they could not properly serve as man's daily 'food of life', which was what the Logos offered men in the flesh."¹²⁵

The symbolism of the leavened bread is explained as follows: "Those who present matzos offer dead, and not living flesh. For the leaven in the dough is for the soul and the salt for the mind. How (then) is matzo, which does not have such things, not lifeless and dead and, in essence, death-dealing? For our Lord Jesus Christ - Who is perfect God and perfect man, twofold by nature - Who assumed a besouled and also a beminded Body from the Ever-Virgin, handed over as an image (of this) the mystery of the New Covenant through a perfect loaf, when He blessed and broke it and said: 'Take, eat! This is the Bread of heaven, both living and life-giving for those who eat it. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood remains in Me and I in him' (John 6.56)."¹²⁶

The Lord told us to pray for our "daily" bread. The very rare Greek word normally translated as "daily", επιουσιος, is better translated as "vital", "substantial", or, more literally, as "for-the-being-of" us men. This is the bread of the Eucharist, which becomes, as a result of the descent of the Holy Spirit, the Body and Blood of Christ, which is vital for our eternal well being. But if, says Patriarch Peter, "we still partake of matzos, it is evident that we are still under the shadow of the Law of Moses and we eat a *Jewish* meal rather than the Logos-filled (λογικην) and living flesh of God, which is at once 'for-the-being-of' (επιουσιον) and 'of-one-being-of' (ομοουσιον) us who have believed."¹²⁷

But this return to the Old Covenant has very serious consequences. For St. Paul says that "you who are justified by the Law are cut off from Christ" (Galatians 5.25). And so in line with this, says Patriarch Peter, "I might perhaps say: If you eat matzos, Christ will be of no avail to you. For these were commanded in memory of the flight from Egypt, and not (in memory) of His saving Passion."¹²⁸ Again, as the Monk Nicetas Stethatos pointed out to the Latins, the use of unleavened bread signified a return to the Old Testament: "Those who still participate in the feast of unleavened bread are under the

¹²⁴ Peter, cited (with some alterations) in Smith, op. cit., p. 56, notes 71 and 72.

¹²⁵ Smith, op. cit., p. 56.

¹²⁶ Peter, cited (with some alterations) in Smith, op. cit., p. 58, note 79.

¹²⁷ Peter, cited (with some alterations) in Smith, op. cit., p. 56, note 72.

¹²⁸ Peter, cited (with some alterations) in Smith, op. cit., p. 57, note 73.

shadow of the law and consume the feast of the Jews, not the spiritual and living food of God... How can you enter into communion with Christ, the living God, while eating the dead unleavened dough of the shadow of the law and not the yeast of the new covenant...?"¹²⁹

Using unleavened rather than leavened bread not only takes us away from the completeness and joy of the New Covenant Pascha and back to the incompleteness and affliction of the Old Covenant Pascha. It also threatens to draw us into the heresy of Apollinarius, who denied that the incarnate Lord had a human soul and mind: "Whoever partakes of matzos unwittingly runs the risk of falling into the heresy of Apollinarius. For the latter dared to say that the Son and Word of God received only a soul-less and mindless Body from the Holy Virgin, saying that the Godhead took the place of the mind and soul."¹³⁰

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The Latins, led in 1054 by Cardinal Humbert of Candida Silva, had two major arguments in defence of their own practice. The first was that the word "leaven" in the New Testament had bad rather than good connotations, as when the Lord spoke about "the leaven of the Pharisees", meaning hypocrisy (Matthew 16.6). Again St. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to "cast out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you are truly unleavened. For indeed Christ our Pascha was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Corinthians 5.6-7). If unleavened bread signified sincerity and truth, reasoned Humbert, was it not more appropriate for the Body of the Truth Himself to be made from unleavened bread?

However, leaven has a quite different symbolical meaning in the following parable of the Lord: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until it was all leavened" (Matthew 13.33). Here leaven indicates the Kingdom of heaven, that is, *grace*, which, when mixed with the dough of human nature in three measures, corresponding to the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, raises it on high. And this is precisely what the Bread of the Eucharist does, uniting the Divine Fire of the Holy Trinity and the perfect and complete Manhood of the God-Man to our human nature, thereby raising it to the Kingdom on high. As Archbishop Averky writes: "In the soul of every individual member of Christ's Kingdom the power of grace invisibly, but gradually and actively starts to possess all the powers of his spirit,

¹²⁹ Stethatos, in Jean Comby, *How to Read Church History*, London: SCM Press, 1985, vol. 1, p. 132).

¹³⁰ Peter, cited (with some alterations) in Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 58, note 80. Over five centuries later, Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople said that the Old Rome had fallen away from Christ because of "Apollinarianism".

and sanctifies and transfigures them. Some interpret the three measures as being the three powers of the soul: the mind, feeling and will.”¹³¹

Faced with the fact of the dual symbolism of leaven in the New Testament, the Latin argument proves to be indecisive. We must therefore return to the fact that leaven *was* used in the Last Supper according to the Evangelists and St. Paul. And we must assume that its symbolism there was positive...

However, at this point the second, and weightier Latin argument comes into play. According to the Latins, “ατρος” in the Gospels must have meant unleavened bread because, according to the same Evangelists, the Lord as a faithful keeper of the Law and perfectly sinless man would not have transgressed the prescription of the Law concerning the celebration of the Jewish feast of Pascha on unleavened bread. Moreover, the Synoptic Gospel-writers (although not John) call these days precisely “the Feast of Unleavened Bread”.

For a clarification of this conundrum, let us turn again to Archbishop Averky: “All four Evangelists describe the Lord’s Mystical Supper with His disciples on the eve of His sufferings on the Cross, but not all report the circumstances of this supper with equal fullness. Besides, the expressions used by the first three Evangelists about the day when the Mystical Supper took place appear to contradict in a certain way the expressions used by the fourth Evangelist, St. John. The only thing we can say with complete certainty is that the Mystical Supper took place on the fifth day of the week, i.e. according to our calendar, **Thursday**. Likewise it is clear that the Lord was condemned and crucified on the sixth day of the week – **Friday**, remained in the tomb on the seventh day of the week – **Saturday**, and was resurrected from the dead on **the first day** of the week. However, perplexity and differences in opinion are elicited with regard to the relationship of the day of the Mystical Supper to the Jewish feast of Pascha that was being celebrated at that time, that is: did the Mystical Supper take place on the 14th of Nisan, on the evening of which the Jewish Pascha began, or on the 13th of Nisan, i.e. on the day preceding the evening when the festival of Pascha began? These perplexities are generated by the following indications of the Evangelists regarding the Mystical Supper:

Matthew 26:17 ‘**Now on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread...**’

Mark 14:12 ‘**Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb...**’

Luke 22:7 ‘**Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread...**’

John 13:1 ‘**Now before the Feast of the Passover...**’

“Pascha began on the evening of the 14th of Nisan and consequently, if we adhere to the strictly biblical word-usage, ‘**the first Day of Unleavened Bread**’ can only be the day after it, i.e. the 15th of Nisan. Evidently the first three

¹³¹ Averky, op. cit., p. 135.

Evangelists did not adhere to the strictly biblical word-usage, but to the everyday, conversational one. In accordance with this word-usage it was possible to call '**the first Day of Unleavened Bread,**' not the 15th of Nisan, which falls on the day after the partaking of the Pascha, nor even the 14th, when the Pascha is eaten, but the 13th – the day before Pascha – as is clearly indicated by the Evangelist John, who affirms that the Mystical Supper was '**before the Feast of Pascha**'. Moreover, Saint John has other testimonies that the Jewish Pascha began only on Friday evening, when the Lord was crucified: John 18:28, – those leading Jesus to Pilate didn't enter the Praetorium, '**lest they should be defiled, but that they may eat the Passover,**' and John 19:31 – the Jews hurried to break the knees of those crucified, so as not to leave the bodies on the crosses on Saturday, '**for that Sabbath was a great day,**' i.e. Saturday coincided with the first day of Pascha and consequently, the Pascha was eaten on the eve, on Friday, after Christ had been crucified."¹³²

In accordance with this interpretation, and contrary to the Latins, the Jews did *not* eat unleavened bread on Holy Thursday. This interpretation is supported by Patriarch Peter: "Even Luke says that Christ took a loaf [αρος] and not matzo. For there was none [no unleavened bread, αζυμα] as yet, it being Thursday when this happened. For that Thursday was still the thirteenth and there were no matzos yet, since the removal of the loaf had not yet occurred. For according to the Torah, matzos began on the fifteenth day, and on the fourteenth the lamb was slain, and nothing more..."¹³³

"The question arises," continues Archbishop Averky, "why did Christ perform the Jewish Pascha, which He undoubtedly performed on the day at the Mystical Supper (even though the Apostles do not describe it in detail, because their main attention was focused on establishing the New Testament Pascha, the Holy Communion of Christ's Flesh and Blood) *one day earlier* than was required. The basic assumption is that because the evening of the 14th of Nisan that year was the beginning of the Sabbath rest (Saturday was approaching), so the Passover lamb was slain on the evening of the 13th. This coincides with Saint Mark's remark: '**When they killed the Paschal lamb** and with Saint Luke's: '**When the Pascha must be killed**'. Besides, it was known that after the Babylonian bondage, the Jews – especially the Galileans – began to be zealous to celebrate even the days preceding the feast day. This was particularly so for the Galileans who had come to Jerusalem: for them the lamb was always slain one day earlier - on the 13th instead of the 14th. This was a great relief for those serving in the temple, for whom slaughtering 256,000 lambs on the one day of the 14th of Nisan would have been too burdensome. Finally, it is supposed that the Lord performed the Pascha one day earlier because He knew that on the following day He would be betrayed into the hands of the Jews and be crucified, and in order that His Sacrifice on the Cross, the forefigure of which were the Paschal lambs, should be offered on the same day and hour when the Paschal lambs were slain. In any case, we know that

¹³² Averky, op. cit., p. 268.

¹³³ Peter, cited (with some alterations) in Smith, op. cit., p. 57, note 75.

the aim of Saint John was to complete the narratives of the first three Evangelists. Therefore, we must accept as indisputable his indication that the Mystical Supper was performed by the Lord before the Paschal feast came, that is, not on the 14th but on the 13th of Nisan."¹³⁴

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Archbishop Averky also teaches that on Holy Thursday, the Lord first celebrated the Old Testament Pascha for the last time, before instituting the Eucharist of the New Testament. As Blessed Theophylact writes, "Having first kept the Pascha in type, He then kept it in truth."¹³⁵ St. Luke describes the scene as follows. The Lord first said: "With desire have I desired to eat this Pascha with you before I suffer; for I say unto you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes." (Luke 22.15-18) Averky understands this fruit of the vine in the Kingdom to signify the Divine joy of the Kingdom of Christ that the disciples will experience after the Resurrection.¹³⁶

While they were still eating, the Lord indicated in a hidden manner that Judas would betray him. Only to John was the identity of the traitor revealed, as he recounts: "Jesus answered, '**He it is to whom I shall give a sop [ψωμιον], when I have dipped it.**' And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then Jesus said unto him, '**That thou doest, do quickly.**'" (John 13.26-27).

Archbishop Averky explains that at the Old Testament Pascha "the bread was soaked in a special sauce made of dates and figs. The head of the family sometimes gave out such morsels as a sign of his special favour. And in this way, of course, the Lord wanted once more to elicit the feeling of repentance in Judas. This was clear only for John. But to the other Apostles the Lord spoke about the traitor, as the first three Evangelists relate, in general terms: '**He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me**', '**Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed**' ... He then having received the sop went out immediately out; and it was night."¹³⁷

The Holy Fathers differ as to whether or not Judas partook of the New Testament Eucharist that had now been instituted. Archbishop Averky believes that he did not. The Divine services of Holy Week, as we read in the *Triodion*, say that he did. Blessed Theophylact adopts a neutral stance: "Worse than a

¹³⁴ Averky, op. cit., p. 269.

¹³⁵ *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1992, p. 227. As the footnote to the translation indicates, however, other Orthodox fathers and writers are not in agreement with Theophylact as to when, or indeed whether, the Lord ate the old Pascha, that is, the Passover meal, that year.

¹³⁶ Averky, op. cit., p. 270.

¹³⁷ Averky, op. cit., p. 273.

beast, Judas did not become more meek when he partook of the common meal. Not even when reprov'd did he listen, but he went so far as to taste of the Lord's Body, and still did not repent. But some say that Christ did not give the Mysteries to the other disciples until Judas had left. So we too should do the same and withhold the Mysteries from those who are evil..."¹³⁸

In any case, one thing is certain: after Christ had blessed the bread, it thereupon immediately ceased to be bread and became His Flesh. This is indicated even by the grammar of the Greek of the Synoptic Evangelists. For, as Archbishop Averky explains, when the Lord said, 'This is My Body', the word for "this" was not the masculine form of the pronoun, "οὗτος», which would have been the correct form if it had qualified the masculine word "ἄρτος», meaning "bread", but "τούτο», which was the neuter form of the pronoun and therefore appropriate for the neuter word "σῶμα», meaning "body". In other words, "at this moment the bread had already ceased to be bread, and had become the true Body of Christ, only retaining the form of bread."¹³⁹ The bread of earth had become the Bread of Heaven...

June 19 / July 2, 2015; revised June 23 / July 6, 2016.

¹³⁸ Blessed Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

¹³⁹ Averky, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

13. BISHOP AUXENTIOS - GTOC'S TROJAN HORSE

“Beware of Greeks bearing gifts,” said Virgil, thinking of the famous story from Homer’s *Iliad* of how the city of Troy was betrayed by the gift of a giant wooden horse. Once the horse was received inside the gates of Troy, soldiers jumped out of it during the night and captured the city... The True Orthodox Church of Greece (GTOC) could be compared to the city of Troy, and its union with the Greek Old Calendarist Cyprianites – to the Trojan horse, a gift that GTOC has hailed as a gift from God, but which may well turn out to be a very damaging trap.

The trap is revealed by the Cyprianite Bishop Auxentios of Etna and Portland, who, helped by his spiritual father, the retired Metropolitan Chrysostomos (*emeritus professor*, as we are yet again reminded), has published a statement that proclaims something that very many have known for a long time but which GTOC has assiduously tried to conceal: that these two bishops, at any rate, have neither repented of their Cyprianism nor have any intention of hiding the fact.¹⁴⁰

The statement is written in the very distinctive Cyprianite style – over-long, flowery and self-indulgent. But we shall cut to the quick, ignoring the rights and wrongs of Bishop Auxentios’ quarrel with an anonymous Greek critic, and highlighting the following sentences:

1. “Little more than a year ago, the two major canonical groups of Old Calendarists in Greece and in this country united...” This is *false*. One of the canonical groups in question – GTOC – was canonical; the other – the Cyprianites – was not. In 1984 the Cyprianites separated from GTOC accusing GTOC of having a false ecclesiology. In 1986 GTOC defrocked Metropolitan Cyprian, accusing him of schism and other things. In this situation, there is no way in which both these groups could be called canonical – and they certainly did not consider each other to be so.

2. “As for the Consecration of Metropolitan Cyprian the Elder of Oropos and Phyle, there has never been any question about its validity. One point alone rather clearly underscores this fact: He was one of the co-Consecrators of His Beatitude, Archbishop Kallinikos, now the First Hierarchy of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece.” *Not true*. From February 20 to 23, 1979, Metropolitan Callistus of Corinth, together with Metropolitan Anthony of Megara, ordained eight archimandrites to the episcopate, who were, in order of ordination: Cyprian (Koutsoubas) of Fili and Oropo, Maximus (Tsitsibakos) of Magnesia, Callinicus (Sarantopoulos) of Achaia, Matthew (Langis) of Oinoe, Germanus (Athnasiou) of Aiolia, Calliopius (Giannakouloupoulos) of Pentapolis, Mercurius (Kaloskamis) of Knossos and Callinicus (Karaphyllakis) of the Twelve Islands. During the services, Archbishop Auxentios was commemorated; but they had not informed him! It was only on February 27

¹⁴⁰ <http://www.dep.church/downloads/Statement.pdf>

that they called Auxentius and asked for his approval. The “Callistites” claimed that this was only a “temporary and curable deviation from the canonical order” whose aim was the cleansing of the Church from moral vices, especially sodomy, since “men have been raised to the priesthood who are both unworthy and incapable.”¹⁴¹ On February 27 Archbishop Auxentius, Metropolitan Gerontius and those with them met “in order to formulate a position on the sedition brought about by its members, Callistus of Corinth and Anthony of Megara, who illegally severed themselves from the body [of the Holy Synod] and high-handedly undertook to consecrate bishops. Upon discussing this matter at length, on the basis of the holy canons of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ, [the Holy Synod] unanimously decreed and imposed upon the two seditious Metropolitans the punishment of deposition, as the holy canons themselves enjoin.” Some days later, the Auxentiite Synod, augmented by no less than ten new bishops, met in order to confirm the invalidity of the Callistite ordinations and the deposition of the Callistites as “conspirators, factionalists, establishers of unlawful assemblies and schismatics”.¹⁴² ROCOR refused to confirm the canonicity of either faction, while the independent Metropolitans Chrysostomos (Kiouisis) of Thessalonica and Acacius of Diauleia condemned both sides. So to affirm that “there has never been any question about the validity” of Metropolitan Cyprian’s consecration is manifestly untrue.

3. “The matter was not that of one side submitting to the other.” But we know for a fact that three bishops – Cyprian the Younger, Ambrose and Klimis – received some kind of absolution from GTOC. So they submitted... The details have not been published, unfortunately. However, the stubborn refusal of Bishop Auxentios and his elder to act likewise does them no credit.

4. “Regarding the ‘heresy of Cyprianitism,’ the ecclesiology of the Synod in Resistance was not an invention of Metropolitan Cyprian, but was based on the Synod’s interpretation of the Conciliar, Patristic, and historical precepts of the Orthodox Church – an interpretation, in fact, expressed in many of the writings of the ‘Father’ of the Old Calendar movement, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Phlorina.” Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina made some mistakes. Cyprian seized on the mistakes and built them up into a full-grown ecclesiology. Chrysostomos repented of his mistakes. Cyprian never repented. Metropolitan Chrysostomos never created a schism on the basis of his mistakes. Cyprian did. Metropolitan Chrysostomos was never condemned in a formal canonical trial. Cyprian was. The difference is great...

¹⁴¹ For two antithetical accounts of this Synod, see *Phylakes Orthodoxias* (Guardians of Orthodoxy), vol. 1, March, 1979, pp. 1-2 and *Agios Kyprianos* (St. Cyprian), № 122, February, 1979, p. 240, on the one hand, and "Latest developments in the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece", special supplement to *Orthodox Christian Witness*, November, 1984, vol. XVIII, № 12 (St. Nectarios Educational Series № 93), Priest-Monk Haralampus (Book Review in *The True Vine*, № 21, vol. 6, № 1, 1994, pp. 56-63), and Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, pp. 102-112, on the other.

¹⁴² *I Phoni tis Orthodoxias* (The Voice of Orthodoxy), № 759, March 2, 1979.

5. "No prayer of any kind was ever read over either of us, nor did we submit any sort of confession for our supposed past heresy. Nor would we ever have accepted such provisions. I think that this fact speaks for itself." *It does indeed.* It demonstrates that whether we call Cyprianism "heresy", "crypto-ecumenism" or "justification for schism", the false teaching that it undoubtedly embodies - as witnessed by many statements of the canonical GTOC before the union of 2014 - has not been repented of by Bishop Auxentios. Moreover, he appears even to be glorying in his stubborn lack of repentance.

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All this represents a very serious challenge to the Synod of GTOC. In a previous article¹⁴³, I pointed out that Bishop Auxentios, in spite of his defiant refusal to repent, had been given an enormous amount of power - virtually a "Pan-North American" diocese - in flagrant defiance of the territorial principle of Church administration. And I concluded that "this arrangement constitutes a de facto broadening of the influence of the Cyprianite ecclesiology (as represented by Bishop Auxentios) at the expense of the influence of the True Orthodox ecclesiology (as represented by Metropolitan Demetrius). For if Bishop Auxentios is a true follower of his "abba" Metropolitan Chrysostomos - and there is no reason to think otherwise - then we can expect not only that Cyprianism will be consolidated in the hearts and minds of the Cyprianites themselves, but also that it will begin to infect areas formerly under truly Orthodox bishops but now under the Cyprianite "pan-North American, Hawaiian and Alaskan" diocese. The cancer has metastasised..."

If the Synod of GTOC is to retain its credibility as an upholder of the True Faith, it must act against Bishop Auxentios. If it does not, then the cancer will spread, and if there are any True Orthodox left in the union they will separate from the compromisers so as to save their souls. After all, we have the terrifying example of the fall of the Russian Church Abroad to warn us. In 1983 ROCOR under St. Philaret anathematized ecumenism and Cyprianism. And yet, only eleven years later, after the death of St. Philaret, Cyprianism was proclaimed the official ecclesiology of ROCOR. And that in spite of many protesters and doubters... Today, the protesters have melted away; there is an ominous silence from the former zealots of GTOC. ROCOR had a Hector under St. Philaret. GTOC today appears to have no Hector to stand out against Achilles - and Cyprianism remains, as before, its Achilles heel... We conclude that their glorying in this deeply flawed union "is not good. Do they not know that little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (I Corinthians 5.6).

July 10/23, 2015.

¹⁴³ <http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/articles/630/-cyprianites-go-marching>.

14. THE CONSTANTINIAN REVOLUTION

“It would be no exaggeration,” writes Protopresbyter James Thornton, “to call the reign of Saint Constantine a genuine revolution, particularly from the standpoint of religion. The Synaxarion for May 21, the day of his commemoration, states that the Church was ‘able to inspire governors and profoundly transform the lives of men and states with the inbreathing of evangelical principles’. However, the Christian revolution was a peaceful revolution, a revolution from above, one that retained all that was wholesome from pagan antiquity – for example art, architecture, literature, and law -, while slowly extinguishing that which was spiritually noxious, unworthy, or morally debilitating. It wisely left essentially untouched the Roman societal structure and the economic system, anticipating their gradual evolution towards the good, under the influence of Christian teaching. Yet, it was a revolution that imbued the Empire with renewed life...”¹⁴⁴

It was indeed a renewal, a Renovatio Imperii. Fr. George Florovsky writes: “The Age of Constantine is commonly regarded as a turning point of Christian history. After a protracted struggle with the Church, the Roman Empire at last capitulated. The Caesar himself was converted, and humbly applied for admission into the Church. Religious freedom was formally promulgated, and was emphatically extended to Christians. The confiscated property was returned to Christian communities. Those Christians who suffered disability and deportation in the years of persecution were now ordered back, and were received with honors. In fact, Constantine was offering to the Church not only peace and freedom, but also protection and close cooperation. Indeed, he was urging the Church and her leaders to join with him in the ‘Renovation’ of the Empire... Constantine was firmly convinced that, by Divine Providence, he was entrusted with a high and holy mission, that he was chosen to re-establish the Empire, and to re-establish it on a Christian foundation. This conviction, more than any particular theory, was the decisive factor in his policy, and in his actual mode of ruling.”¹⁴⁵

The renewal of the Roman Empire by the first Christian Emperor was surely a vindication of the Christians’ loyal and patient attitude to the pagan Roman empire. Tertullian had said in the third century, “The world may need its Caesars. But the Emperor can never be a Christian, nor a Christian ever be an Emperor.”¹⁴⁶ However, he was wrong: in response to the patience and prayer of the Christians, the most powerful, secular and pagan element in Old Roman society, the very apex of its antichristian system, was transfigured into an instrument of the Grace of God. “The kingdom of this world”, it seemed, had become “the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ” (Revelation 11.15).

¹⁴⁴ Thornton, *Pious Kings and Right-Believing Queens*, Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2013, p. 97.

¹⁴⁵ Florovsky, “Antinomies of Christian History: Empire and Desert”, *Christianity and Culture*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1974, pp. 72, 74.

¹⁴⁶ Tertullian, in Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, London: Bantam Press, 1988, p. 155.

Paradoxically, in spite of his vast achievements, St. Constantine has received a remarkably bad press, not only from pagans and heretics in his own time but also from medieval and modern Christians. He has been accused of being the originator of “Caesaropapism”, of causing the fall of the very Church that he saved from destruction, even of a supposed “heresy of Constantinianism”...¹⁴⁷

Let us now examine the real essence of the Constantinian revolution, beginning with a brief description of his path to power...

1. The Triumph of the Cross

In 285 the Emperor Diocletian came to the throne. He promptly decided to divide his power into four, into a “tetrarchy” of emperors consisting of two Augusti, one for the East and the other for the West, together with their deputies, the Caesars. The four emperors were bound together through intermarriage and through the supposed descent of the Augusti from Jupiter and of the Caesars from Hercules, “gods by birth and creators of gods”.

At first the reorganization worked well; peace and prosperity was restored to the empire. But then, in 299, an ominous event took place in Antioch. The priests repeatedly failed to get any responses to their questions through the entrails of their sacrificial victims. This seemed to indicate that the gods were displeased, and Diocletian was worried...

In 302 the same thing happened, again at Antioch. Diocletian conferred with his fellow Augustus, Galerius, who advised him to persecute the Christians. Diocletian hesitated... Then he consulted the oracle of Apollo at Didyma. The oracle replied that “the just ones” had silenced the prophecy. “The just ones” were interpreted to mean the Christians, and on February 23, the feast of the Terminalia, the persecution began. Later, the tetrarchy assembled in Rome to celebrate their joint rule, to introduce various reforms, and to establish the old religions and their morals and “exterminate completely” the new ones.¹⁴⁸ Churches were destroyed, the Holy Scriptures burned, and Christians who refused to sacrifice were tortured and killed.

To many Christians it seemed that the world was about to end insofar as Diocletian’s persecution of the Christians, the worst in Roman history, threatened to destroy the Roman empire in its role as “that which restraineth” the advent of the Antichrist and thereby usher in the end of the world. As St. Constantine’s tutor, Lactantius, wrote: “It is apparent that the world is destined to end immediately. The only evidence to diminish our fear is the fact that the city of Rome continues to flourish. But once this city, which is the veritable capital of the world, falls and there is nothing in its place but ruins, as the sibyls

¹⁴⁷ Edward Leithart, *Defending Constantine*, Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2010, p. 250, note 61.

¹⁴⁸ Jean-Louis Voisin, “Le Songe de l’Empereur” (The Dream of the Emperor), *Histoire* (Le Figaro), 8, June-July, 2013, p.46.

predict, who can doubt that the end will have arrived both for humanity and for the entire world?"¹⁴⁹

However, at the height of the persecution, on May 1, 305, Diocletian and Maximian abdicated and handed over power to four Caesars. This allowed the Caesar in the far West, Constantius Chlorus, to bring the persecution to an end in Gaul and Britain (it had in any case been very mild there). Then, after Constantinus' death, on July 25, 306, the Roman troops in York proclaimed his son Constantine emperor. In 312 Constantine marched on Rome against the Caesar Maxentius. Just before the fateful battle of the Milvian Bridge, outside Rome, both Constantine and his army saw a cross of light in the sky with the words: "In this sign conquer" above it. Eusebius records the story as Constantine himself related it to him, confirming his words with an oath: "He said that at about midday, when the sun was beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription Conquer by This (Hoc Vince). At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also."¹⁵⁰

"Earlier than Eusebius, though," writes Peter Leithart, "Lactantius, who as the tutor to Constantine's sons was closer to the emperor than was Eusebius, recorded a similar story. According to his account, 'Constantine was directed in a dream to cause the heavenly sign to be delineated on the shields of his soldiers, and so to proceed to battle.' Following the directive, he had their shields marked with the Greek letter *chi* (an 'X' shape), through which a perpendicular line was drawn and then curved around the top. The result was a *chi-rho* combination (which looks like the English letters XP), the first letters of the name of Christ."¹⁵¹ Although the two accounts differ, Leithart has convincingly shown that they can both be accepted as true, referring as they probably did to two different events...¹⁵²

Constantine had the pagan standards removed and the Christian one with the *chi-rho*, the so-called Labarum, put in their place. The result was an easy victory over the much larger army of Maxentius. The next day, October 29, Constantine entered Rome and was hailed as Emperor of the West.¹⁵³

Breaking with tradition, Constantine refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, and in particular to Jupiter in the Capitol. "And because Constantine made no supplication to evil spirits," wrote St. Augustine, "but worshipped only the true God, he enjoyed a life more favoured by marks of worldly

¹⁴⁹ Lactantius, *Divine Institutions*; quoted in Robert Garland, "Countdown to the Beginning of Time-Keeping", *History Today*, vol. 49 (4), April, 1999, p. 42.

¹⁵⁰ Eusebius, *On the Life of Constantine*, I, 28; quoted in John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries*, London: Penguin, 1990, p. 39. Much later, in the reign of Julian the Apostate, the Martyrs Eusignius and Artemius confirmed the truth of this vision, having been witnesses of it themselves.

¹⁵¹ Leithart, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

¹⁵² Leithart, *op. cit.*, chapter 4.

¹⁵³ Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, London & Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 43.

prosperity than anyone would have dared imagine was possible.”¹⁵⁴ Moreover, he was not slow to ascribe his victory to Christ and the Cross: “In the royal city he raised this sacred standard and inscribed definitely and indelibly that this saving sign is the preserver of the Roman Empire and the whole kingdom. But when in the most crowded place of Rome they raised a statue to him, he immediately ordered that a long spear in the shape of a cross be put in the hand of his representation and that the following inscription be written word for word in Latin: ‘By this saving and famous sign, the true witness of courage, I saved and liberated your city from the yoke of tyranny, and on liberating it, returned to the Roman senate and people its freedom, its former glory and its celebrity.’”¹⁵⁵

He continued to experience the power of the Cross throughout his reign. Thus “wherever the sign of the cross was shown, enemies were turned to flight, while the victors pursued them. When the Emperor heard about this, he ordered the saving sign, as being the most genuine means of victory, to be transferred to the place where he saw one of his regiments weakening. Immediately victory was restored to it, because the warriors at the sight of it were strengthened by a vigour and a power sent from on high.”¹⁵⁶

In the West the persecution of the Christians was now over. However, in the East the persecution continued until 313. In that year St. Constantine met the new emperor in the East, Licinius, and with him proclaimed an Edict of religious toleration: “Our purpose is to grant both to the Christians and to all others full authority to follow whatever worship each man has desired; whereby whatsoever divinity dwells in heaven may be benevolent and propitious to us, and to all who are placed under our authority”.¹⁵⁷

As Fr. Alexis Nikolin writes: “The Edict of Milan decisively rejected many traditions of antiquity. St. Constantine clearly proclaimed that Christianity is not the property of any particular people, but is a universal religion, the religion of the whole of humanity. If formerly it was thought that a given religion belongs to a given people and for that reason it is sacred and untouchable, now the lawgiver affirmed a new principle: that the sacred and untouchable religion was that religion which belonged to all peoples – Christianity. It was obviously not an attempt to bring Christianity under the usual (pagan) juridical forms, but a principled change in those forms.”¹⁵⁸

As a result, as Eusebius of Caesarea wrote: “Divine joy blossomed in all hearts as we saw that every place which a little while before had been reduced to dust by the tyrants’ wickedness was now, as if from a prolonged and deadly stranglehold, coming back to life; and that cathedrals were again rising from their foundations high into the air, and far surpassing in magnitude those

¹⁵⁴ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 5.25.

¹⁵⁵ Eusebius, *On the Life of Constantine*, I, 40.

¹⁵⁶ Eusebius, *On the Life of Constantine*, II, 7.

¹⁵⁷ Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, 48. 2-12.

¹⁵⁸ Nikolin, *Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo* (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, p. 27.

previously destroyed by the enemy. Emperors, too, the most exalted (Constantine and Licinius) by a succession of ordinances in favour of the Christians, confirmed still further and more surely the blessings God showered upon us; and a stream of personal letters from the emperor reached the bishops, accompanied by honours and gifts of money. Old troubles were forgotten, and all irreligion passed into oblivion; good things present were enjoyed, those yet to come eagerly awaited. In every city the victorious emperor published decrees full of humanity and laws that gave proof of munificence and true piety. Thus all tyranny had been purged away, and the kingdom that was theirs was preserved securely and without question for Constantine and his sons alone."¹⁵⁹

Constantine's triumphal progress continued: when Licinius turned from toleration to persecution of Christians, Constantine defeated him at Chrysopolis in 324. All the eastern provinces now came within his dominion, and the eastern Christians received the liberation that their western brothers had already had for several years...

And yet the Triumph of the Cross under St. Constantine proved, paradoxically, that God does not need Christian kings in order to save the world. They help - they help greatly. But for almost three centuries from the Resurrection of Christ the Church had survived and grown in the teeth of everything that Jewish and pagan fury could hurl against her, and without the help of any earthly forces.

For, as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow wrote: "there is benefit in the union of the altar and the throne, but it is not mutual benefit that is the first foundation of their union, but the independent truth, which supports both the one and the other. May the king, the protector of the altar, be blessed; but the altar does not fear the fall of this protection. The priest is right who preaches that the king should be honoured, but not by right of mutuality, but by pure obligation, even if this took place without the hope of mutuality... Constantine the Great came to the altar of Christ when it already stood on the expanses of Asia, Europe and Africa: he came, not in order to support it with his strength, but in order to submit himself with his majesty before its Holiness. He Who dwells in the heavens laughed at those who later thought of lowering His Divine religion to dependence on human assistance. In order to make their sophistry laughable, He waited for three centuries before calling the wise king to the altar of Christ, and meanwhile from day to day king, peoples, wise men, power, art, cupidity, cunning and rage rose up to destroy this altar. And what happened in the end? All this has disappeared, while the Church of Christ stands - but not because it is supported by human power..."¹⁶⁰

[2. The Hierarchical Principle](#)

¹⁵⁹ Eusebius, *Church History*, X, 2, 10.

¹⁶⁰ Metropolitan Philaret, quoted in Lev Regelson, *Tragedia Russkoj Tserkvi, 1917-1945* (The Tragedy of the Russian Church, 1917-1945), Paris: YMCA Press, 1977, p. 23.

With regard to internal statehood, the Constantinian revolution was only partial. The hierarchical principle, for example, remained unchanged – Constantine was no democrat, and by abolishing the tetrarchy he reasserted one-man-rule. The distinction between true autocracy and tyranny also remained, although subtly modified in accordance with Christian priorities, as we shall see in detail later. The real change was in the idea that the State and its prosperity was no longer the highest value. For above the State was the Church, and the State existed in order to serve the Church, not vice-versa.

The hierarchical principle remained unchanged because it was fully in accordance with Christian teaching. For the Apostles did not only preach obedience to the emperor: they extended the hierarchical principle to every level of society. Thus "be subject for the Lord's sake," says St. Peter, "to *every* human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and praise those who do right..." (I Peter 2.13).

This included even the institution of slavery: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentled, but also to the forward" (I Peter 2.18). Again St. Paul says: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed. And those who have believing masters must not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service" (I Timothy 6.1-2).

Following the Apostles, the Holy Fathers asserted that the hierarchical principle of one-man rule is natural, God-given and superior to any other principle of government. In developing this thought, they adopted the originally pagan idea that the earthly king is the image of the Heavenly King, purifying it of the tendency, so natural to pagan thought, to *identify* the earthly and the Heavenly, the image and its archetype. Earthly kings could be images of the Heavenly King, and were to be venerated as such; but they were not god-kings, not objects of worship. Thus Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea wrote of St. Constantine: "The kingdom with which he is invested is an image of the heavenly one. He looks up to see the archetypal pattern and guides those whom he rules below in accordance with that pattern." "The ruler of the whole world is the second Person of the All-Holy Trinity – the Word of God, Who is in everything visible and invisible. From this all-embracing Reason the Emperor is rational, from this Wisdom he is wise, from participation in this Divinity he is good, from communion with this Righteousness he is righteous, in accordance with the idea of this Moderation he is moderate, from the reception of this highest Power he is courageous. In all justice one must call a true Emperor him who has formed his soul with royal virtues, according to the image of the Highest Kingdom".¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Eusebius, *Oration in Honour of Constantine*.

While rejecting the pagan idea of the despotic god-king, the Christian idea of the emperor as the image of the Heavenly King also excluded the no less pagan idea of democratism, rule by the people. Thus Eusebius: "The example of monarchical rule there is a source of strength to him. This is something granted to man alone of the creatures of the earth by the universal King. The basic principle of kingly authority is the establishment of a single source of authority to which everything is subject. Monarchy is superior to every other constitution and form of government. For polyarchy, where everyone competes on equal terms, is really anarchy and discord. This is why there is one God, not two or three or even more. Polytheism is strictly atheism. There is one King, and His Word and royal law are one."¹⁶² Again, St. Basil the Great wrote: "Even the king of the birds is not elected by the majority because the temerity of the people often nominates for leader the worst one; nor does it receive its power by lot, because the unwise chance of the lot frequently hands over power to the last; nor in accordance with hereditary succession, because those living in luxury and flattery are also less competent and untaught in any virtue; but according to nature one holds the first place over all, both in its size and appearance and meek disposition."¹⁶³ And St. Gregory the Theologian wrote: "The three most ancient opinions about God are atheism (or anarchy), polytheism (or polyarchy), and monotheism (or monarchy). The children of Greece played with the first two; let us leave them to their games. For anarchy is disorder: and polyarchy implies factious division, and therefore anarchy and disorder. Both these lead in the same direction – to disorder; and disorder leads to disintegration; for disorder is the prelude to disintegration. *What we honour is monarchy...*"¹⁶⁴

Later generations of Byzantines remained faithful to the hierarchical principle. Thus St. John Chrysostom wrote: "Equality is known to produce strife. Therefore God allowed the human race to be a monarchy, not a democracy. But the family is constructed in a similar way to an army, with the husband holding the rank of monarch, the wife as general and the children also given stations of command."¹⁶⁵ Again, the champion of St. Chrysostom, St. Isidore of Pelusium, "after pointing to the order of submission of some to others established everywhere by God in the lives of rational and irrational creatures, concludes therefrom: 'Therefore we are entitled to say that... power, that is, royal leadership and authority, is established by God.'¹⁶⁶ And over four centuries later St. Theodore the Studite generalized the principle as follows: "There is one Lord and Giver of the Law, as it is written: one authority and one Divine principle over all. This single principle is the source of all wisdom,

¹⁶² Eusebius, *Oration in Honour of Constantine*.

¹⁶³ St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 8. In accordance with Roman conceptions, St. Basil did not believe that monarchical power had to be hereditary. The virtue of hereditary succession was developed later.

¹⁶⁴ St. Gregory, *Sermon* 29, 2. Cf. *Sermon* 3, 2.

¹⁶⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily* 34 on I Corinthians, 7.

¹⁶⁶ Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, in Richard Betts and Vyacheslav Marchenko, *Dukhovnik Tsarskoj Sem'i: Svyatitel' Feofan Poltavskij* (The Spiritual Father of the Royal Family: Holy Hierarch Theophan of Poltava), Moscow: Balaam Society of America, 1994, p. 213.

goodness and good order. It extends over every creature that has received its beginning from the goodness of God... It is given to one man only... to construct rules of life in accordance with the likeness of God. For the divine Moses in his description of the origin of the world that comes from the mouth of God, cites the word: 'Let us create man in accordance with Our image and likeness' (Genesis 1.26). Hence the establishment among men of every dominion and every authority, especially in the Churches of God: one patriarch in a patriarchate, one metropolitan in a metropolia, one bishop in a bishopric, one abbot in a monastery, and in secular life, if you want to listen, one king, one regimental commander, one captain on a ship. And if one will did not rule in all this, there would be no law and order in anything, and it would not be for the best, for a multiplicity of wills destroys everything."¹⁶⁷

The principle of one-man rule in politics was greatly strengthened in Byzantium by the idea that the fount of all secular law in the empire was *the emperor himself*. Indeed, from the time of Justinian in the sixth century we come across the idea that the emperor is "the living law", *the law personified*. As Tom Holland writes: "If it was true, as Justinian ringingly declared, that 'what medicine is to disease, so laws are to public affairs', then there was much that first needed to be done before the emperor's prescription could be applied to the sickening world. The sheer scale and antiquity of the Roman people's achievements in the field of law had resulted in a legacy that was intimidatingly chequered. Justinian, however, was hardly the man to duck such a challenge. His first step, only a few months into his reign, was the appointment of a commission to harmonise the various unwieldy collections of laws used by previous emperors, then, a year and a half later, he charged a second commission with the even more daunting task of collecting the entire stupendous body of private writings on Roman law. Complete constitutions had to be revised, almost two thousand individual books called in and minutely sifted; tens of thousands of excerpts made. The resulting codification, achieved in record time, was so staggering that it appeared to many something more than human. Justinian himself presented it proudly as a process of restoration; but there was something about it as well of a revolution. 'We have by means of old laws not only brought matters into a better condition, but we have also promulgated new laws.' The emperor saw no need to conceal the fact. He was himself, as he declared, *nomos empsychos* - the 'living law'. Here, in this self-promotion, was the ultimate refinement of what generations of emperors had been working to achieve. Henceforward, the rules by which the Roman people lived and were bound were to have just the single fountainhead: the emperor himself, enthroned in his palatial citadel. No wonder, then, that Justinian should have sought, not merely to impose his stamp upon the long centuries of Roman legal achievement, but also prescribe where and how that achievement should be taught. Private law schools were definitively banned. No teachers were to be licensed, save for those directly sanctioned by the state.

¹⁶⁷ St. Theodore, *The Philokalia*, volume IV, p. 93; in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *Russkaia Ideologia* (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 46-47.

Now, more than ever, the whole world was to be administered from the centre, from the palace of Constantinople.”¹⁶⁸

This, as we shall see, did *not* mean that the emperor was also to govern the Church. But it did mean that in Greco-Roman antiquity and the Middle Ages, right down to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the idea was firmly established that all true power, whether in Church or State, came from above, from God, being mediated through the one-man leader of the Empire or the collegial leadership of the Church. And this idea was passed down without distortion to the Third Rome, Russia.

Thus Professor I.M. Andreev has characterized the three forms of statehood as follows: “Of the three forms of state power – monarchy, democracy and despotism – strictly speaking, only the first (monarchy) is based on a religious-ethical principle, the second (democracy) is based on an a-religious-ethical principle, and the third (despotism) is based on an anti-religious (satanic) principle.”¹⁶⁹

[3. Autocracy and Tyranny](#)

The Holy Apostles and Martyrs in the time of the pagan empire believed, on the one hand, that the emperor’s power was established by God and should be obeyed whenever possible, and on the other hand, that he should be disobeyed if he commanded something contrary to God’s commandments. No authority, whether political or ecclesiastical, should be listened to if it contradicted the supreme authority, which is God. As the Apostles said to the Jewish Sanhedrin: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge” (Acts 4.19).

According to Protestant writers, after the persecutions ended and the empire became Christian, the Church lost her independence and entered into a union with the State that made her a slave of the Emperors. Paradoxically, therefore, according to the Protestants, the triumph of the Church under St. Constantine was at the same time the end of the Church as an independent institution. However, the truth is rather the opposite: the fourth-century Fathers showed a heroic independence even in relation to the most Christian of the Emperors. *Of course*, the accession of the first Christian Emperor with its many major benefits for the Church and for the spreading of Christianity was welcomed by the Church, and the bishops willingly entered into a “symphony of powers” between Church and State. But when the Emperors betrayed the Faith – as did, for example, most of those in the fifty-year period between St. Constantine the Great and St. Theodosius the Great – the Holy Fathers rose up in protest against them, using language that was as strong as anything uttered against the pagan emperors.

¹⁶⁸ Holland, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, London: Abacus, 2014, pp. 159-160.

¹⁶⁹ Andreev, “Pomazannik Bozhij” (“The Anointed of God”), *Pravoslavnij Put’* (The Orthodox Way), 1951, p. 129.

Thus when St. Constantine's son Constantius apostasized from Orthodoxy and converted to the Arian heresy, believing that Christ was not the pre-eternal God and Creator but a created being, St. Athanasius, who had previously addressed him as "very pious", a "worshipper of God", "beloved of God" and a successor of David and Solomon, now denounced him as "patron of impiety and Emperor of heresy,... godless, unholy,.. this modern Ahab, this second Belshazzar", like Pharaoh, worse than Pilate and a forerunner of the Antichrist.¹⁷⁰ Again, St. Hilary of Poitiers wrote to Constantius: "You are fighting against God, you are raging against the Church, you are persecuting the saints, you hate the preachers of Christ, you are annulling religion; you are a tyrant no longer only in the human, but in the divine sphere... You lyingly declare yourself a Christian, but are a new enemy of Christ. You are a precursor of Antichrist, and you work the mysteries of his secrets."¹⁷¹

Constantius' heretical cast of mind made it easier for him to assume the place of Christ as head of the Church. Thus at the Council of Milan in 355, he said: "My will is law". To which St. Osius of Cordoba, replied: "Stop, I beseech you. Remember that you are a mortal man, fear the Day of Judgement, preserve yourself pure for that. Do not interfere in matters that are essentially ecclesiastical and do not give us orders about them, but rather accept teaching from us. God has entrusted you with the Empire, and to us He has entrusted the affairs of the Church. And just as one who seizes for himself your power contradicts the institution of God, so fear lest you, in taking into your own hands the affairs of the Church, do not become guilty of a serious offence. As it is written, give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. We are not permitted to exercise an earthly role; and you, Sire, are not authorised to burn incense."

At about this time, the Persian King Shapur started to kill the clergy, confiscate church property and raze the churches to the ground. He told St. Simeon, Bishop of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, that if he worshipped the sun, he would receive every possible honour and gift. But if he refused, Christianity in Persia would be utterly destroyed. In reply, St. Simeon not only refused to worship the sun but also refused to recognize the king by bowing to him. This omission of his previous respect for the king's authority was noticed and questioned by the King. St. Simeon replied: "Before I bowed down to you, giving you honour as a king, but now I come being brought to deny my God and Faith. It is not good for me to bow before an enemy of my God!" The King then threatened to destroy the Church in his kingdom... He brought in about one hundred priests and about one thousand other Christians and killed them before the saint's eyes. The saint encouraged them to hope in eternal life. And after everyone had been killed, he himself was martyred.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ St. Athanasius, in J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989, p. 36. In his *History of the Arians* (77) Athanasius also calls him "the abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel".

¹⁷¹ F.W. Farrar, *The Lives of the Fathers*, Edinburgh, 1889, vol. I, p. 617.

¹⁷² St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, April 17.

This shows that the Fathers and Martyrs of the Church recognized the authority of kings and emperors only so long as they did not persecute the Church of God. At the same time, non-recognition – that is, recognition of the power as tyrannical – did not necessarily mean rebellion. Thus the Fathers did not counsel rebellion against heretical emperors such as Constantius, but only resistance against those of his laws that encroached on Christian piety. However, when Julian the Apostate (361-363) came to the throne, passive resistance turned into active, if not physical, attempts to have him removed. Thus St. Basil the Great prayed for the defeat of Julian in his wars against the Persians; and it was through his prayers, and those of the holy hermit Julian of Mesopotamia, that the apostate was in fact killed.¹⁷³

St. Basil the Great defined the difference between a true king and a tyrant as follows: “If the heart of the king is in the hands of God (Proverbs 21.1), then he is saved, not by force of arms, but by the guidance of God. But not everyone is in the hands of God, but only he who is worthy of the name of king. Some have defined kingly power as lawful dominion or sovereignty over all, without being subject to sin.” And again: “The difference between a tyrant and a king is that the tyrant strives in every way to carry out his own will. But the king does good to those whom he rules.”¹⁷⁴

St. Basil’s definition of true kingship seems very strict. For what Roman emperor was not subject to sin and always did good to those whom he ruled? By this definition almost all the emperors were in fact tyrants... However, we can bring St. Basil’s definition more into line with how the Christians actually regarded the emperors if we make two important distinctions. The first is between the personal evil of many of the emperors, on the one hand, and the goodness of the institution which they maintained and incarnated, on the other. And the second is between the status of the pagan emperors before Constantine, on the one hand, and the status of the pagan or heretical emperors after Constantine, on the other.

What made Julian the Apostate so terrible in the eyes of the Holy Fathers was precisely the fact that he was an apostate, a Christian emperor who then reverted to paganism. That is why St. Basil’s friend, St. Gregory the Theologian, rejoiced at the news of his death: “I call to spiritual rejoicing all those who constantly remained in fasting, in mourning and prayer, and by day and by night besought deliverance from the sorrows that surrounded us and found a reliable healing from the evils in unshakeable hope... What hoards of weapons, what myriads of men could have produced what our prayers and the will of God produced?” Gregory called Julian not only an “apostate”, but also “universal enemy” and “general murderer”, a traitor to Romanity as well as to Christianity, explicitly denying that his was a power from God and therefore

¹⁷³ Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 19; St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, October 21, the *life* of St. Julian; V.A Konovalov, *Otnoshenie Khristianstva k Sovetskoj Vlasti* (The Relationship of Christianity to Soviet Power), Montreal, 1936, p. 35.

¹⁷⁴ St. Basil, quoted in Fomin, S. & Fomina, T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, pp. 66, 102.

requiring obedience: "What demon instilled this thought in you? If every authority were acknowledged as sacred by the very fact of its existence, Christ the Savior would not have called Herod 'that fox'. The Church would not hitherto have denounced ungodly rulers who defended heresies and persecuted Orthodoxy. Of course, if one judges an authority on the basis of its outward power, and not on its inner, moral worthiness, one may easily bow down to the beast, i.e. the Antichrist, 'whose coming will be with all power and lying wonders' (II Thessalonians 2.9), to whom 'power was given... over all kindred, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwelt upon the earth shall worship him, whose names were not written in the book of life of the Lamb' (Revelation 13.7-8)." ¹⁷⁵

Apart from being an apostate, Julian was the first - and last - of the Byzantine emperors who openly trampled on the memory and legitimacy of St. Constantine, declaring that he "insolently usurped the throne". In this way he questioned the legitimacy of the Christian Empire as such - a revolutionary position very rare in Byzantine history. If, as Paul Magdalino suggests, "each emperor's accession was a conscious act of renewal of the imperial order instituted by Constantine the Great," and "the idea of each new ruler as a new Constantine was implicit in the dynastic succession established by the founder of Constantinople"¹⁷⁶, then Julian's rejection of Constantine was clearly a rejection of the imperial order as such. In this sense Julian was an *anti-emperor* as well as an anti-christ.

That this is how the Byzantines looked at it is suggested by what happened at the death of Julian and the accession of the Christian Emperor Jovian in 363: "Themistus assured the people of the city that what they were getting, after Constantine's son Constantius and Constantine's nephew Julian, was nothing less than a reincarnation of Constantine himself."¹⁷⁷ Jovian's being a "new Constantine" was a guarantee that he represented a return to the old order and true, Christian Romanity (Romanitas). From this time new Byzantine emperors were often hailed as new Constantines, as were the Christian kings of the junior members of the Christian commonwealth of nations from England to Georgia.

Another act of Julian's that elicited particular horror was his reversal of Emperor Hadrian's decree forbidding the Jews from returning to Jerusalem and, still worse, his helping the Jews to rebuild the Temple... By a miracle of God the rebuilding of the Temple was forcibly stopped. St. Gregory the Theologian tells how the Jews enthusiastically set about the rebuilding. But "suddenly they were driven from their work by a violent earthquake and whirlwind, and they rushed together for refuge to a neighbouring church... There are some who say that the church doors were closed against them by an invisible hand although these doors had been wide open a moment before... It is, moreover, affirmed and believed by all that as they strove to force their way

¹⁷⁵ St. Gregory, *First Word against Julian*, 35; *Second Word against Julian*, 26.

¹⁷⁶ Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: the Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994, pp. 2, 3.

¹⁷⁷ Magdalino, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

in by violence, the fire, which burst from the foundation of the Temple, met and stopped them; some it burnt and destroyed, others it injured seriously... But the most wonderful thing was that a light, as of a cross within a circle, appeared in the heavens... and the mark of the cross was impressed on their garments... a mark which in art and elegance surpassed all painting and embroidery." ¹⁷⁸

But if Julian had succeeded, then, wondered the Christians, what would have prevented him from sitting in the Temple as God – that is, from becoming the Antichrist himself? And so it is from this time, as Dagron points out, "that the face of each emperor or empress is scrutinised to try and recognize in it the characteristic traits of the Antichrist or of the sovereigns, good or bad, who precede his coming..." ¹⁷⁹

After Julian, nobody believed that *all* emperors were established by God. The principle of monarchical power was good and from God – that was the true meaning of St. Paul's words in Romans 13.1. But St. Paul had specified what he meant by "power" by saying that the king was "a servant of God for good", to reward the good and punish the evildoers. This could not apply to rulers such as Julian, who were not kings but rebels and tyrants.

As St. John Chrysostom said, commenting on Romans 13.1: "Is every ruler, then, elected by God? This I do not say, he [Paul] answers. Nor am I now speaking about individual rulers, but about the thing in itself. For that there should be rulers, and some rule and others be ruled, and that all things should not just be carried on in one confusion, the people swaying like waves in this direction and that; this, I say, is the work of God's wisdom. Hence he does not say, 'for there is no ruler but of God', but it is the thing [monarchical power as such] he speaks of, and says, 'there is no power but of God'." ¹⁸⁰

Rulers like Julian, according to the Fathers, were not established by God, but were allowed to ascend the throne by Him in order to punish the people. As St. Isidore of Pelusium wrote: "If some evildoer unlawfully seizes power, we do not say that he is established by God, but we say that he is *permitted*, either in order to spit out all his craftiness, or in order to chasten those for whom cruelty is necessary, as the king of Babylon chastened the Jews." ¹⁸¹ And again St. Jerome said: "He often permits wicked kings to arise in order that they may in their wickedness punish the wicked." ¹⁸²

As for obedience to the rulers, the principle was the same in the post-Constantinian and post-Julian era as in the pre-Constantinian era. As St. Basil

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in Marjorie Strachey, *Saints and Sinners of the Fourth Century*, London: William Kimber, 1958, p. 78). St. Ambrose of Milan and the fifth-century Church historians Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret and Rufinus all confirm St. Gregory's story.

¹⁷⁹ Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris : Gallimard, 1996, p. 167.

¹⁸⁰ St. Chrysostom, *Homily 23 on Romans*, 1.

¹⁸¹ St. Isidore, *Letter 6 to Dionysius*.

¹⁸² St. Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 2.21.

the Great put it: "It is right to submit to higher authority whenever a command of God is not violated thereby."¹⁸³ Again, Blessed Theodoret of Cyr wrote: "Paul does not incite us to obey even if we are being constrained to impiety..."¹⁸⁴

Perhaps the most famous example of the Church refusing to obey the State was provided by St. John Chrysostom in his relations with the Empress Eudoxia. In 403 a silver statue of the empress was erected in Constantinople, before which the public games were performed. "These," writes Socrates Scholasticus, "John regarded as an insult offered to the Church, and having regained his ordinary freedom and keenness of tongue [after his first exile], he employed his tongue against those who did these things... The empress once more applied his expression to herself as indicating marked contempt towards her own person: she therefore endeavoured to procure the convocation of another council of bishops against him. When John became aware of this, he delivered in the church that celebrated oration beginning with: 'Again Herodias raves, again she is troubled, again she dances, and again she desires to receive John's head on a platter'."¹⁸⁵

Not only apostate or heretical emperors experienced the opposition of the Fathers, but also any emperor who transgressed the Law of God. For, as St. Basil the Great wrote: "The Emperors must defend the decrees of God".¹⁸⁶ And St. Gregory the Theologian wrote: "The law of Christ submits you to our power and our judgement. For we also rule, and our power is higher than yours. In fact, must the spirit bow before matter, the heavenly before the earthly?"¹⁸⁷

St. John Chrysostom wrote: "The priesthood is as far above the kingdom as the spirit is above the body. The king rules the body, but the priest - the king, which is why the king bows his head before the finger of the priest."¹⁸⁸ "The Church is not the sphere of Caesar, but of God. The decrees of the State authorities in matters of religion cannot have ecclesiastical significance. Only the will of God can be the source of Church law. He who bears the diadem is no better than the last citizen when he must be reproached and punished. Ecclesiastical authority must stand firmly for its rights if the State authorities interfere in its sphere. It must know that the boundaries of royal power do not coincide with those of the priesthood, and the latter is greater than the former."¹⁸⁹

This teaching on the independence of the Church of, and superiority over, the State came to be embodied in the canon law of the Church, as in the 30th Apostolic Canon, which defrocked any cleric who had obtained his post with

¹⁸³ St. Basil, *The Morals*, Rule 79 (Cap. 1).

¹⁸⁴ Blessed Theodoret, *P.G.* 66, col. 864, commenting on Romans 13.5.

¹⁸⁵ Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI, 18.

¹⁸⁶ St. Basil, *Rule 79*.

¹⁸⁷ St. Gregory, *Sermon 17*.

¹⁸⁸ St. Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*.

¹⁸⁹ St. Chrysostom, quoted in Zyzykin, *Patriarch Nikon*, Warsaw, 1931, p. 68.

the help of the secular authorities. Again, in the *Apostolic Constitutions* we read: "The king occupies himself only with military matters, worrying about war and peace, so as to preserve the body, while the bishop covers the priesthood of God, protecting both body and soul from danger. Thus the priesthood surpasses the kingdom as much as the soul surpasses the body, for it binds and looses those worthy of punishment and forgiveness."¹⁹⁰

Perhaps the most striking and instructive example of the boldness of the fourth-century Christian hierarchs even against Orthodox emperors was provided by St. Ambrose of Milan. Ambrose's views on Church-State relations were squarely in the tradition of the Eastern Fathers: "The Emperor is not above the Church, but *in* the Church," he wrote. "If one reads the Scriptures, one sees that it is bishops who judge Emperors."¹⁹¹

Now in 390, a riot took place in Thessalonica that led to the murder of several magistrates. In his anger on hearing the news, the Emperor Theodosius ordered the execution of the perpetrators. But there was no trial, and many innocents were killed, perhaps as many as seven thousand.

"News of this lamentable calamity," writes Theodoret, "reached Ambrose. The emperor on his arrival at Milan wished according to custom to enter the church. Ambrose met him outside the outer porch and forbade him to step over the sacred threshold. 'You seem, sir, not to know,' said he, 'the magnitude of the bloody deed that has been done. Your rage has subsided, but your reason has not yet recognized the character of the deed. Peradventure your Imperial power prevents your recognizing the sin, and power stands in the light of reason. We must however know how our nature passes away and is subject to death; we must know the ancestral dust from which we sprang, and to which we are swiftly returning. We must not because we are dazzled by the sheen of the purple fail to see the weakness of the body that it robes. You are a sovereign, sir; of men of like nature with your own, and who are in truth your fellow slaves; for there is one Lord and Sovereign of mankind, Creator of the universe. With what eyes then will you look on the temple of our common Lord - with what feet will you tread that holy threshold, how will you stretch forth your hands still dripping with the blood of unjust slaughter? How in such hands will you receive the all-holy Body of the Lord? How will you who in rage unrighteously poured forth so much blood lift to your lips the precious Blood? Begone. Attempt not to add another crime to that which you have committed. Submit to the restriction to which God the Lord of all agrees that you be sentenced. He will be your physician, He will give you health.'

"Educated as he had been in the sacred oracles, Theodosius knew clearly what belonged to priests and what to emperors. He therefore bowed to the rebuke of Ambrose, and retired sighing and weeping to the palace. After a considerable time, when eight months had passed away, the festival of our

¹⁹⁰ *Apostolic Constitutions*, XI, 34.

¹⁹¹ St. Ambrose, in Michael Grant, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, London: Phoenix, 1997, p. 156.

Saviour's birth came round and the emperor sat in his palace shedding a storm of tears..."¹⁹²

4. Empire and Priesthood

In 324, Constantine defeated Licinius and imposed his rule on the East, thereby delivering the Christians from persecution. Rome was now, not the persecutor, but the protector, of the Christian people. Indeed, already years before Constantine had started to legislate in favour of Christianity with decrees: "on the abolition of pagan games (314), on the liberation of the Christian clergy from civil obligations and church lands from additional taxes (313-315), on the abolition of crucifixion as a means of capital punishment (315), on the abolition of the branding of criminals (315), against the Jews who rose up against the Church (315), on the liberation of slaves at church gatherings without special formalities (316), on forbidding private persons from offering sacrifices to idols and divining at home (319), on the annulment of laws against celibacy (320), on the celebration of Sunday throughout the Empire (321), on the right of bishops to be appeal judges (321), on banning the forcible compulsion of Christians to take part in pagan festivals (322), on the banning of gladiatorial games (325), on allowing Christians to take up senior government posts (325), on the building of Christian churches and the banning in them of statues and images of the emperor (325)."¹⁹³

The decree on absolving the clergy from holding civic office is particularly interesting: "[The clergy] shall not be drawn away by any deviation and sacrifice from the worship that is due to the Divinity, but shall devote themselves without interference to their own law... for it seems that rendering the greatest possible service to the Deity, they most benefit the state."¹⁹⁴ Some would see in this a cynical attempt to exploit the Deity in the interests of the emperor. But a more reasonable interpretation is that he was already feeling his way to a doctrine of the symphony of powers, in which the emperor helps the Church as her defender and "the bishop of those outside the Church", while the Church helps the emperor through her prayers - all to the ultimate glory of God and the salvation of men.

"What must have really shocked traditional Romans," writes Peter Salway, "was Constantine's transfer to the Church of certain powers that had always been the prerogative of Roman magistrates. Even Constantine's own praetorian prefect, himself a Christian, was not sure that he had understood the emperor correctly when Constantine decided that either party in a legal action could have the case transferred out of the ordinary courts to the local bishop - and that, if necessary, the secular authorities were required to enforce the judgement. This extraordinary ecclesiastical privilege did not, admittedly, last,

¹⁹² Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 17, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, pp. 143-144.

¹⁹³ Nikolin, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁹⁴ Quoted in Charles Freeman, "The Emperor's State of Grace", *History Today*, vol. 51 (1), January, 2001, p. 11.

but it sheds an interesting light on how revolutionary Constantine was prepared to be.”¹⁹⁵

Constantine tried to conform his legislation to Christian principles. He gave the Church the full honour due her as an institution founded by the One True God; for it was the Body of the God-Man Himself, and therefore higher than any human institution, not excluding the Empire itself. Christianity did not simply take the place of the old Roman religion in the State apparatus; for Constantine understood that the Christian faith was not to be honoured for the sake of the empire, or in submission to the empire, but that the empire existed for the sake of the faith and was to be submitted to it. One of the most powerful rulers in history, who exercised absolute political control over the whole of the ancient Roman empire, and did not shrink from waging war against, and executing, his political opponents, Constantine nevertheless deferred to the Church in all things spiritual. As Edward Cutts writes: “The merit of Constantine’s relations with the Church lies in what he abstained from doing, as much as in what he did. It was a proof of the highest genius in the Emperor... to realize as he did the position of the Church as an *imperium in imperio*; to appreciate as he did the true relations of the Emperor to the Church; and to take his line as he did, not shrinking from initiative and intervention, yet so rarely overstepping the due limits of his prerogative. It is not pretended, indeed, that Constantine’s history is free from infringements of these right relations, but such exceptions are very few; and it is, on the whole, very remarkable that the true relations which ought to regulate the co-ordinate action of Church and State were so immediately and full established, and on the whole so scrupulously observed, as they were by the first Christian Emperor.”¹⁹⁶

This was most clearly illustrated at the First Ecumenical Council in 325, when the emperor took part in the proceedings only at the request of the bishops, and did not sit on a royal throne, but on a little stool somewhat apart from the bishops.¹⁹⁷ He did not vote with the bishops, let alone impose his will on them. As Leithart writes, “Constantine did not dominate the council. He did not formulate the final creed, nor did he sign off on it – being, again, an unbaptized nonbishop. It is difficult, however, to believe that the bishops could have come to such a thoroughgoing conclusion [the defeat of Arianism, with only two bishops rejecting the agreement] without his political skill and strength of personality...”¹⁹⁸

When he addressed the Council Fathers Constantine demonstrated his sincere belief that the internal peace and prosperity of the Church was even more important than the external peace and prosperity of the Empire: “Now that we, with the help of God the Saviour, have destroyed the tyranny of the atheists who entered into open war with us, may the evil spirit not dare to

¹⁹⁵ Salway, *A History of Roman Britain*, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 249-250.

¹⁹⁶ Cutts, *Constantine the Great*, London: SPCA, 1881, pp. 160-161.

¹⁹⁷ Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky, “The First Ecumenical Council”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 34, N 6, November-December, 1984, p. 9.

¹⁹⁸ Leithart, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

attack our holy Faith with his cunning devices. I say to you from the depths of my heart: the internal differences in the Church of God that I see before my eyes have plunged me into profound sorrow... Servants of the God of peace, regenerate amidst us that spirit of love which it is your duty to instil in others, destroy the seeds of all quarrels."¹⁹⁹

Again, to the Fathers who did not attend the Council of Nicaea he wrote: "That which has been established in accordance with the God-inspired decision of so many and such holy Bishops we shall accept with joy as the command of God; for everything that is established at the Holy Councils of Bishops must be ascribed to the Divine will."

Indeed, so obedient was he to the Church that, as I.I. Sokolov writes, "at the First Ecumenical Council, according to the witness of the historian Rufinus, the Emperor Constantine said: 'God has made you priests and given you the power to judge my peoples and me myself. Therefore it is just that I should submit to your verdict. The thought has never entered my mind to be judge over you.'"²⁰⁰

Constantine saw himself as the instrument whereby God replaced the false religions with the true: "With such impiety pervading the human race, and the State threatened with destruction, what relief did God devise?... I myself was the instrument He chose... Thus, beginning at the remote Ocean of Britain, where the sun sinks beneath the horizon in obedience to the law of nature, with God's help I banished and eliminated every form of evil then prevailing, in the hope that the human race, enlightened through me, might be recalled to a proper observance of God's holy laws."²⁰¹

Whatever Constantine did for the Church he did, not as arbitrary expressions of his imperial will, but *in obedience to the commission of the Church*. Thus the Fathers of the First Council welcomed the Emperor as follows: "Blessed is God, Who has chosen you as king of the earth, having by your hand destroyed the worship of idols and through you bestowed peace upon the hearts of the faithful... On this teaching of the Trinity, your Majesty, is established the greatness of your piety. Preserve it for us whole and unshaken, so that none of the heretics, having penetrated into the Church, might subject our faith to mockery... Your Majesty, command that Arius should depart from his error and rise no longer against the apostolic teaching. Or if he remains obstinate in his impiety, drive him out of the Orthodox Church." As Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) writes, "this is a clear recognition of the divine election of Constantine as the external defender of the Church, who is obliged to work

¹⁹⁹ St. Constantine, in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *Ruskaia Ideologia* (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 71.

²⁰⁰ Sokolov, *Lektsii po Istorii Greko-Vostochnoj tserkvi* (Lectures on the History of the Greek-Eastern Church), St. Petersburg, 1914, p. 15.

²⁰¹ Eusebius, *On the Life of Constantine*, II, 28.

with her in preserving the right faith, and in correspondence with the conciliar sentence is empowered to drive heretics out of the Church."²⁰²

The most famous definition of the relationship between Constantine and the Church is to be found in two passages from Eusebius' *Life*, which speak of him as "like a common bishop" and "like a bishop of those outside". The first passage is as follows: "[Constantine] was common for all, but he paid a completely special attention to the Church of God. While certain divergences manifested themselves in different regions, he, like a common bishop established by God, reunited the ministers of God in synods. He did not disdain to be present at their activities and to sit with them, participating in their episcopal deliberations, and arbitrating for everyone the peace of God... Then, he did not fail to give his support to those whom he saw were bending to the better opinion and leaning towards equilibrium and consensus, showing how much joy the common accord of all gave him, while he turned away from the indocile..."

In the second passage the emperor receives the bishops and says that he, too, is a bishop: "But you, you are bishops whose jurisdiction is within the Church: I also am a bishop, ordained by God to oversee those outside the Church." Eusebius immediately explains that Constantine's "bishopric" here consisted, not in liturgical priestly acts, but in "overseeing all the subjects of the empire" and leading them towards piety.²⁰³ The word translated "overseeing" [επισκοπει] here has the same root as the word for "bishop" [επισκοπος], thereby underlining the commonality of functions. So the emperor was not *really* a bishop, but only *like* a bishop - in both his missionary and in his supervisory roles. And he excelled in both. Thus, on the one hand, he responded vigorously to St. Nina's request that he send bishops and priests to help her missionary work in Georgia. Again, on hearing that the Christians were being persecuted in Persia he threatened to go to war with that state. On the other hand, he convened numerous councils of bishops to settle doctrinal disputes throughout the empire - in particular, those caused by the Donatists in Africa and the Meletians in Egypt and, above all, the empire-wide contagion caused by Arius.

In this way he acted as *the focus of unity* for the Church on earth. Nor did this role as a focus of unity *within* the Church mean that he thought himself to have power *over* the Church. Thus when the Donatists appealed to him against the judgement of the bishops, he said: "What mad presumption! They turn heavenly things into earthly, appealing to me as if the matter was of a civic nature."²⁰⁴ And on the decision of the Council of Arles (314) he said: "The bishops' decision should be looked upon as though the Lord Himself had been sitting in judgement."

²⁰² A. Tuskarev, *Tserkov' o Gosudarstve* (The Church on the State), Staritsa, 1992, p. 75.

²⁰³ Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine*, I, 44; IV, 24.

²⁰⁴ Having failed in their petition, the Donatists then decided that they didn't need Constantine anyway. For "what have Christians to do with kings? Or what have bishops to do with the palace?" (Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, I, 22).

Constantine cared desperately that the bishops should achieve unity, and was deeply frustrated at every sign of disunity. Thus on hearing of the Donatist heresy he said: "Until now I cannot be completely calm until all my subjects are united in brotherly unity and offer to the All-holy God the true worship that is prescribed by the Catholic Church". And at the opening of the First Ecumenical Council, convened to judge the heresy of Arius, he said: "I hold any sedition within the Church of Christ as formidable as any war or battle, and more difficulty still to bring to an end. I am consequently more opposed to it than to anything else..."

The bishops understood Constantine's sincere veneration of the authority of the Church; and so when St. Athanasius was condemned by a council at Tyre, and appealed to the emperor against the decision, he was not asking the secular power to overthrow the decision of the ecclesiastical power, as had been the thought of the Donatists earlier in the reign, but was rather calling on a son of the Church (albeit not yet baptized) to defend the decision of the Holy Fathers against heretics. Even his most important and valuable contribution to the Council of Nicaea, his suggestion of the term homoousios, "consubstantial", to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son was probably made in collaboration with Bishops Ossius and Alexander.²⁰⁵ Of course, being mortal, Constantine was not always consistent in the execution of his principles (as when he refused Athanasius' appeal). But the principles themselves were sound...

The emperor as focus of unity was especially needed when the Church was afflicted by problems that affected the whole Church. Such, for example, were the problems of Arianism and the Church calendar, both of which were resolved at the First Ecumenical Council. Since the Church herself, contrary to the assertions of later papist propagandists, lacked a "bishop of bishops" having ecumenical jurisdiction, only the emperor could carry out this coordinating function. He alone had the ecumenical authority necessary to compel the bishops from all parts of the empire to meet together in Synods, and remain there until decisions were agreed upon. And he alone could then see that these decisions into practice...

The lynch-pin of the pagan absolutist system of government had been the concentration in the hands of one man of supreme power in both the political and the religious spheres. Thus in Rome the emperor was also the leading priest, the pontifex maximus. Constantine did not renounce this title (that had to wait until the Emperor Gratian towards the end of the century.) As we have seen, however, he renounced any claims to lord it over the Church, and the fourth-century Fathers vigorously opposed any such attempt on the part of his successors. And yet this did not mean that they wished the emperor to play no part at all in Church affairs. On the contrary: they expected him to pass laws that would benefit the Church, convene Church Councils to resolve disputes

²⁰⁵ Leithart, op. cit., p. 170.

and condemn heretics, and give the force of secular law to the decisions of those Councils. Such a role was clearly incompatible with the complete separation of Church and State as that is understood today; in fact, it inevitably gave the emperor a considerable importance and influence in Church affairs. The question, then, arises: did the emperor have a quasi-priestly role, if not as pontifex maximus on the pagan model, at any rate as a kind of extra-hierarchical bishop, or “bishop of those outside”, to use St. Constantine’s phrase?

In later centuries this question would be bound up with the question of the significance of the sacrament of royal anointing that the Church bestowed on all new rulers. However, in early Byzantium there was no such sacrament – or at any rate, no *visible* sacrament, so the status of the Christian emperor was viewed not in the context of any Church rite, but in the context of the actual power that the emperor exercised in relation to the Church. And in the first half of the fifth century that power was increasing...

The reason was the decline in quality of the Church hierarchy, and the increasing influence of heretical teachings such as Nestorianism and Monophysitism. As the century wore on, and the chaos caused by the heretics increased, the emperors were called upon to take a more active role in Church affairs.

Some “interference” by them was even sanctioned by Canon 93 (96) of the Council of Carthage in the year 419: “It behoves the gracious clemency of their Majesties to take measures that the Catholic Church, which has begotten them as worshippers of Christ in her womb, and has nourished them with the strong meat of the faith, should by their forethought be defended, lest violent men, taking advantage of the times of religious excitement, should by fear overcome a weak people, whom by arguments they were not able to pervert”. As an ancient epitome of this canon puts it: “The Emperors who were born in the true religion and were educated in the faith, ought to stretch forth a helping hand to the Churches. For the military band overthrew the dire conspiracy which was threatening Paul.”²⁰⁶

That the Emperor, as well as the hierarchs, was required to defend the faith can be seen in the life of St. Hypatius of Rufinianus: “When Nestorius had left for Ephesus, and the [Third Ecumenical] Council had assembled, on the day when he should be deposed, Saint Hypatius saw in a vision that an angel of the Lord took hold of Saint John the Apostle, and led him to the most pious Emperor [Theodosius II] and said to him, ‘Say to the Emperor: “Pronounce your sentence against Nestorius”.’ And he, having heard this, pronounced it. Saint Hypatius made note of this day, and it was verified that Nestorius was deposed on that very day...”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, Eerdmans edition, pp. 488, 489.

²⁰⁷ Holy Transfiguration Monastery, “The Seat of Moses”, quoted in *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, Boston, 1982, p. 65.

St. Isidore of Pelusium believed that some interference by the emperors was needed in view of the sorry state of the priesthood: "The present hierarchs, by not acting in the same way as their predecessors, do not receive the same as they; but undertaking the opposite to them, they themselves experience the opposite. It would be surprising if, while doing nothing similar to their ancestors, they enjoyed the same honour as they. In those days, when the kings fell into sin they became chaste again, but now this does not happen even with laymen. In ancient times the priesthood corrected the royal power when it sinned, but now it awaits instructions from it; not because it has lost its own dignity, but because that dignity has been entrusted to those who are not similar to those who lived in the time of our ancestors. Formerly, when those who had lived an evangelical and apostolic life were crowned with the priesthood, the priesthood was fearful by right for the royal power; but now the royal power is fearful to the priesthood. However, it is better to say, not 'priesthood', but those who have the appearance of doing the priestly work, while by their actions they insult the priesthood. That is why it seems to me that the royal power is acting justly."²⁰⁸ It was acting justly, in Isidore's view, because "although there is a very great difference between the priesthood and the kingdom (the former is the soul, the latter – the body), nevertheless they strive for one and the same goal, that is, the salvation of citizens".²⁰⁹

Emperors had to intervene especially when heretics became violent – as when the Monophysite heretic Dioscuros murdered St. Flavian. Thus the officials of Emperor Theodosius II played a major role in the Third Ecumenical Council. And it was the decisive intervention of the Emperors Marcian and Pulcheria that made possible the convening of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in 451 which anathematized the Monophysite heresy. For, as Marcian said at the Council: "When by the decree of God we were elected to the kingdom, then amidst the very many needs of the State, there was no matter that occupied us more than that the true and Orthodox faith, which is holy and pure, should remain in the souls of all without doubts".²¹⁰

St. Leo, Pope of Rome, welcomed the interference of the emperors. Thus to the Emperor Theodosius II he wrote that he had "not only the soul of an Emperor, but also the soul of a priest". And to the Emperor Marcian he wished "the palm of the priesthood as well as the emperor's crown".²¹¹ Again he wrote to Emperor Leo I: "You must unceasingly remember that Royal power has been entrusted to you, not only for administering the world, but also and in particular to rule the Church".²¹² Of course, this "rule" over the Church was not to be understood literally, but rather in the sense of powerful help, and when the emperor fell into heresy, the popes reverted to a more assertive

²⁰⁸ St. Isidore, *Tvorenia (Works)*, Moscow, 1860, vol. 3, pp. 400, 410.

²⁰⁹ St. Isidore, quoted in M.V. Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw, 1931, vol. I, p. 244.

²¹⁰ St. Marcian, quoted in Archbishop Seraphim, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

²¹¹ J. Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996, p. 11.

²¹² St. Leo, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

posture, as we shall see. At such times, when the majority of bishops were betraying the truth, the pious emperors stood out as the representatives of the laity, which, as the Eastern Patriarchs were to declare in their encyclical of the year 1848, is the guardian of the truth of the Church. At such times they were indeed higher than the clergy, if not by the grace they had received, at any rate in view of the fact that the clergy had forsaken their vocation and trampled on that grace they had received. At such times, they were images of the Heavenly King, their vocation being, like His, to witness to the truth. For as the King of kings said to Pilate: "You say that I am a king. For that I was born, and for that I came into the world, to witness to the truth" (John 18.37).

For, as Dagron points out, "the emperor could not remain neutral. He was the guarantor and often the principal architect of the unity of the Church. Thus the Orthodox or heretical council unanimously celebrated the sovereign 'guarded by God' by giving him without niggardliness the title of 'teacher of the faith', 'new Paul', 'equal to the apostles, illumined like the bishops by the Holy Spirit'. At the end of the fourth session of the council held in Constantinople in 536, the bishops expressed the conviction of all in declaring that, 'under an Orthodox emperor', the Empire had nothing and nobody to fear; and Patriarch Menas concluded: 'It is fitting that nothing of that which is debated in the holy Church should be decided against the advice and order [of the emperor]'."

It is in this context that one has to understand the highly rhetorical expressions applied to the rulers. "The distinction between the two powers was never as clearly formulated as while there was a disagreement between them. When there was concord or the hope of harmony, the celebration or hope of unity carried the day. Nobody found anything wrong when the synod that condemned the heretic Eutyches in Constantinople in 448 acclaimed Theodosius with the words: 'Great is the faith of the emperors! Many years to the guardians of the faith! Many years to the pious emperor, the emperor-bishop (τω αρχιερει βασιλει).' The whole world is equally agreed, a little later at the Council of Chalcedon, in acclaiming Marcian as 'priest and emperor', at the same time as 'restorer of the Church, teacher of the faith, New Constantine, New Paul and New David'. At the same time Pope Leo congratulated Theodosius II, and then Marcian, on the sacerdotalis industria, on the sacerdotalis anima, and on the sacerdotalis palma with which God had rewarded them, and he declared to Leo I that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit in matters of the faith. Except during periods of tension, the adjective sacerdotalis was part of the formula of the pontifical chancellery for letters addressed to the emperors of Constantinople. The composers of elegies were not behindhand, in the West as in the East. Procopius of Gaza underlined that Anastasius had been elected to be a bishop before being named emperor, and that he reunited in himself 'that which is most precious among men, the apparatus of an emperor and the thought of a priest'; Ennodius of Pavia (473-521) proclaimed Theodoric to be 'prince and priest'; Venantius Fortunatus, in the second half of the 6th century, called Childebert I 'Melchisedech noster, merito rex atque sacerdos'; towards 645 an anonymous panegyric characterised

Clotaire I as quasi sacerdos; Paulinus, bishop of Aquileia, in 794 encouraged Charlemagne to be 'Dominus et pater, rex et sacerdos'. To justify the canonisation of a king, they said that he had been led during his reign acsi bonus sacerdos. We are in the domain of rhetoric, but that does not mean that they could say anything and break the taboos. Even if the words have a metaphorical and incantatory meaning, even if their association distilled a small dose of provocation, there was nothing abnormal in affirming that the ideal emperor was also a priest."²¹³

The near-assimilation of the emperor to the priesthood can be seen in the evolution of the ceremony of coronation from pagan to Christian times. Thus Sir Steven Runciman writes: "When Diocletian instituted a coronation ceremony it was performed by the senior lay minister; and the first Christian Emperors continued the practice. Theodosius II, for example, was crowned by the prefect of the City of Constantinople. But at his successor Marcian's coronation the Patriarch was present²¹⁴; and Marcian's successor Leo I was certainly crowned by the Patriarch. The Patriarch was by now the official with the highest precedence after the Emperor; but his intervention turned the coronation into a religious ceremony. In the course of it the Emperor underwent a sort of ordination; he received charismatic powers. Henceforward the Imperial Palace was known as the Sacred Palace. Its ceremonies were liturgical ceremonies, in which he placed the double role of God's representative on earth and representative of the People before God, a symbol both of God and of the Divine Incarnation. The acclamations to which he was entitled stressed his position. On Christmas Eve he was addressed in a prayer that begged Christ would 'move all nations throughout the universe to offer tribute to Your Majesty, as the Magi offered presents to Christ'. The Whitsun [Pentecost] hymns declare that the Holy Ghost descends in fiery tongues on to the Imperial head. At the same time the Emperor paid homage to God in the name of the Christian commonwealth. In the words of the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogennitus it was through the Palace ceremonies that 'the Imperial power can be exercised with due rhythm and order and the Empire can thus represent the harmony and movement of the universe as it stems from the Creator'. The Byzantines fervently believed in this interpretation of the Emperor's position. It did not prevent them from seeking to depose an Emperor whom they thought unworthy or ungodly. His sanctity then might not preserve him from a violent death. It was the symbol, not necessarily the person, that they revered..."²¹⁵

Nevertheless, the Empire and the Priesthood remained separate principles in the Byzantine understanding. They were both from God, and were meant to work in "symphony" to the glory of God, as the Emperor Justinian proclaimed in his famous *Novella 6*. But they remained separate principles in the New

²¹³ Dagron, *op. cit.*, pp. 314-315.

²¹⁴ According to Alexander Dvorkin, the crowning of Marcian and Pulcheria "was the first in history to be carried out in church" (*Očerki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novogorod, 2006, p. 292).

²¹⁵ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 58-59.

Testament as in the Old (cf. the punishment of King Uzziah for trying to combine the two).

Indeed, so important is this distinction that its violation is the surest sign of the coming of the Antichrist. For if the Orthodox Emperor is “he who restrains the coming” of the Antichrist, then the combining of the two principles in one person is the surest sign that he has already come. Hence the fall of the Empire must herald his coming and the end of the world....

5. Religious Freedom

Contrary to what is often thought, the pagan Roman emperors had been in general tolerant of religion. This was for reasons of political expediency – a multi-ethnic and multi-faith population is more easily controlled if all its faiths are respected and legalized. Another motive was superstition. After all, calculated the ruler, the god of this people is more likely to help me if I do not persecute his people... And so in Imperial Rome before Constantine periods of persecution were intermittent and generally short-lived, and directed exclusively at Christians. As Perez Zagorin writes, Rome “was tolerant in practice in permitting the existence of many diverse religious cults, provided their votaries also complied with the worship of the divine emperor as part of the state religion. Unlike Christianity and Judaism, Roman religion had no sacred scriptures and did not depend on any creed, dogmas, or ethical principles. It consisted very largely of participation in cult acts connected with the worship of various deities and spirits that protected the Roman state and were associated with public, family, and domestic life. At nearly all stages of their history the Romans were willing to accept foreign cults and practices; this de facto religious pluralism is entirely attributable to the polytheistic character of Roman religion and had nothing to do with principles of values sanctioning religious toleration, a concept unknown to Roman society or law and never debated by Roman philosophers or political writers.”²¹⁶

Christianity introduced a new depth and a new complexity to the question of religious toleration. On the one hand, the Christians, like the Jews, rejected the idea of a multiplicity of gods, and insisted that there was only one name by which men could be saved – that of the One True God, Jesus Christ. This position did not logically imply that Christians wanted to persecute people of other faiths. But the “exclusivism” of Christianity, then as now, was perceived by the pagan-ecumenist majority, whether sincerely or insincerely, as a threat to themselves. On the other hand, the Christians set no value on the forcible conversion of people to the Faith: man, being in the image of God, was free, and could come to God only by his own free will. As the Christian lawyer Tertullian put it: “It does not belong to religion to force people to religion, since it must be accepted voluntarily.”²¹⁷ In his *Barring of Heretics* (ca. 200) Tertullian insisted on the truth of Christianity and declared that heretics could not be

²¹⁶ Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 4.

²¹⁷ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 2.

called Christians. Nevertheless, he was “opposed to compulsion in religion and stated in other works that ‘to do away with freedom of religion [libertas religionis]’ was wrong. While Christians, he said, worship the one God and pagans worship demons, both ‘human and natural law’ ordain that ‘each person may worship whatever he wishes’.”²¹⁸

However, Tertullian was writing at a time when the Church, as a persecuted minority, clearly benefited from religious toleration. What if the Church herself were to gain political power? After all, the Old Testament Kings were *required* by God to defend the faith of the people *as their first duty*, and the prophets constantly reminded them that they would be judged by God in accordance with their fulfilment or non-fulfilment of this duty. This same duty was taken very seriously by the Byzantine emperors Constantine I, Theodosius I and Justinian I. Constantine is often accused of introducing religious intolerance into the State. However, in accordance with the Edict of Milan and the teaching of his tutor Lactantius, he professed and practiced a policy of religious toleration. For, as he declared: “It is one thing to undertake the contest for immortality voluntarily, another to compel others to do it likewise through fear of punishment.”²¹⁹ While not hiding his Christianity, and characterizing paganism as “superstition”, he allowed the pagans to practise their faith. Thus in 324, just after defeating Licinius and taking control of the Eastern provinces, he wrote: “I wish, for the common good of the empire and of all men, that Thy people should be in peace and remain exempt from troubles. May those who are in error joyfully receive the enjoyment of the same peace and tranquillity as the believers, for the sweetness of concord will have the power to correct them also and lead them on the right path.” In addition to allowing the pagans to practise their religion, Constantine never excluded them “from the administration of the State: one finds them among the praetorian prefects, the prefects of Rome, the ministers and even the entourage of the Emperor.”²²⁰

Timothy Barnes writes: “Constantine allowed pagans to retain their beliefs, even to build new sacred edifices. But he allowed them to worship their traditional gods only in the Christian sense of that word, not according to the traditional forms hallowed by antiquity. The emperor made the distinction underlying his policy explicit when he answered a petition from the Umbrian town of Hispellum requesting permission to build a temple of the Gens Flavia. Constantine granted the request but specified that the shrine dedicated to the imperial family must never be ‘polluted by the deceits of any contagious superstition’. From 324 onwards Constantine constantly evinced official disapproval of the sacrifices and other cultic acts which constituted the essence of Greco-Roman paganism: Christianity was now the established religion of the Roman Empire and its ruler, and paganism should now conform to Christian patterns of religious observance.”²²¹

²¹⁸ Zagorin, op. cit., p. 21.

²¹⁹ Quoted in Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, London: Penguin Books, 1988, p. 637.

²²⁰ Pierre Maraval, “La Louve et la Croix” (The She-Wolf and the Cross), *Histoire* (Le Figaro), 8, June-July, 2013, p. 63.

²²¹ Barnes, op. cit., pp. 212-213.

Constantine also defended the Christians against the Jews. He released all slaves whom the Jews had dared to circumcise, and those Jews who killed their co-religionists for converting to Christianity were executed.²²²

Nevertheless, Constantine steadily went about his goal of Christianizing the empire, preaching and legislating against the enemies of the faith: by 324 pagan sacrifices had been banned, heresy was illegal, and the official religion of the Empire was Orthodoxy. And if his bark was worse than his bite, and many of his decrees were not executed by local governors, they nevertheless had a long-term effect. By the 350s pagan sacrifices were rare. "Heretics were exiled, and Arius's books were burned, just as the anti-Christian treatise of Porphyry was destroyed by imperial order. Constantine's religious policy created an 'atmosphere' of hostility to heresy as much as to paganism."²²³

This raises the question, as Leithart writes: "If religion was a matter of free will, why did Constantine so vigorously oppose paganism in his decrees, letters and speeches, and how could he justify any restrictions on religion at all? If Constantine thought that religion should be free, what was he doing forbidding sacrifice?"

"Elizabeth Digeser offers terminology and categories that help make sense of Constantine's policies. She distinguishes forbearance from toleration, and tolerance from 'concord'. Forbearance is a pragmatic policy, not guided by moral or political principle. Forbearance might change to persecution if political conditions change. The periods of Roman acceptance of Christianity were periods of forbearance. Toleration is 'disapproval or disagreement coupled with an unwillingness to take action against those viewed with disfavor in the interest of some moral or political principle.' This principle could arise, as for Lactantius, from a theory concerning the nature of religion, or, alternatively, from a theory about human nature or about the limits of state power. By this definition, toleration does not involve an idea of the equality of all viewpoints but the opposite. Toleration assumes *disapproval* of certain religious expressions but refrains for principled reasons from using state power to suppress the disapproved religion. Beyond toleration, Digeser introduces the category of 'concord': '(1) its attitude of forbearance is dictated by some moral, political, or even religious principle and (2) it expects that by treating its dissenters with forbearance it is creating conditions under which they will ultimately change their behavior to conform to what the state accepts.' These three strategies of religious policy build on one another: toleration assumes forbearance on principle, it expects that the forbearance will have the ultimate outcome of unity if not complete uniformity."²²⁴

²²² L.A. Tikhomirov, *Religiozno-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii* (The Religious-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 340.

²²³ Leithart, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

²²⁴ Liethart, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

After Constantine, his hostility towards paganism and heresy was redirected against Orthodoxy. Thus the Emperor Constantius, an Arian, was also a persecutor of Orthodox Christians. And in the late 340s the Donatist Marculus was executed. Julian the Apostate was a pagan and persecuted pagans, killing the holy Martyrs Eusignius and Artemius. It was during the reign of Theodosius I (379-395) that the question of religious freedom was confronted directly for the first time, and in 384 Bishop Priscillian of Avila was executed on a charge of sorcery.²²⁵

The Holy Fathers of the fourth century rejected the idea of killing people for their faith. As S.V. Troitsky writes: “Christians are called to freedom (Galatians 5.13), and every religious act of conscious Christians must bear on itself the mark of freedom. The ancient Christian writer Lactantius demonstrated that religion exists only where there is freedom, and disappears where freedom has disappeared, and that it is necessary to defend the truth with words and not with blows (verbis, non verberibus).²²⁶ ‘The mystery of salvation,’ writes St. Gregory the Theologian, ‘is for those who desire it, not for those who are compelled’. The 108th canon of the Council of Carthage cites the law of Honorius that ‘everyone accepts the exploit of Christianity by his free choice’, and Zonaras in his interpretation of this canon writes: ‘Virtue must be chosen, and not forced, not involuntary, but voluntary... for that which exists by necessity and violence is not firm and constant’.”²²⁷

St. John Chrysostom (+407) preached non-violence to heretics combined with mercilessness to heresy: “Christians above all men are forbidden to correct the stumblings of sinners by force... It is necessary to make a man better not by force but by persuasion. We neither have authority granted us by law to restrain sinners, nor, if it were, should we know how to use it, since God gives the crown to those who are kept from evil, not by force, but by choice.”²²⁸ St. John interpreted the parable of the wheat and the tares to mean that the heretics (the tares) should not be killed. But they were to be resisted in other ways. “As we can see from the many occurrences of the phrase ‘stop the mouths of the heretics’ in his writings, St. John showed not the slightest indulgence towards false teachings; indeed, much of his life as a preacher was devoted to combating such heretics as the Eunomians, the Judaizers, and the Manichaeans. However, he was resolutely opposed to the use of violence by the authorities to subdue heretics. And it is this reservation of his that must be carefully understood, if one is to grasp what may seem to be a contradictory view of heretics. He knew from pastoral experience that heretics were far more likely to be turned aside

²²⁵ Jonathan Hill, *Christianity: The First 400 Years*, Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2013, pp. 233, 294.

²²⁶ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 19.

²²⁷ Troitsky, *Khristianskaia Philosophia Braka* (The Christian Philosophy of Marriage), Paris: YMCA Press, p. 207. At the same time, extending the boundaries of the empire for the sake of facilitating mission was justified. Thus according to St. Gregory the Great, following Augustine, war could be waged “for the sake of enlarging the res publica within which we see God worshipped... so that the name of Christ will travel among the subject people through the preaching of the faith.” (*Registrum*, 1.73)

²²⁸ St. John Chrysostom, quoted by Fr. Antonious Henein, orthodox-tradition@egroups.com, 8 August, 2000.

from their errors by prayer: 'And if you pray for the Heathens, you ought of course to pray for Heretics also, for we are to pray for all men, and not to persecute. And this is good also for another reason, as we are partakers of the same nature, and God commands and accepts benevolence towards one another' (*Homilies on the First Epistle to St. Timothy*, 7). Near the end of this homily on the dangers of anathematizing others, he says that 'we must anathematize heretical doctrines and refute impious teachings, from whomsoever we have received them, but show mercy to the men who advocate them and pray for their salvation.' In other words, we must love the heretic, but hate the heresy."²²⁹

However, it may be wondered whether St. John's words should be interpreted as an absolute ban on any kind of coercion in any circumstances. For there were other prominent and holy Christians contemporary with him who did approve of some measure of coercion in some circumstances. In particular, there was the question of the rights of the Christian emperor. If the Church as an institution or individual Christians could only persuade, not coerce, was it not the task of the emperor to coerce, or at any rate limit the activity of those who refused to be persuaded?

It is significant that no prominent churchman denounced the undoubtedly coercive laws passed against pagans and heretics by the Emperor Theodosius I (379-395). Theodosius decreed, writes John Julius Norwich, "that only those who professed the consubstantiality of the Trinity (in other words the Nicene Creed) could be considered *Catholic Christians* – a designation that appears here for the first time. 'All others,' the edict continues, 'we pronounce to be mad and foolish, and we order that they shall bear the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to bestow on their conventicles the title of churches: these are to be visited first by divine vengeance, and secondly by the stroke of our own authority, which we have received in accordance with the will of heaven.'"²³⁰

As Perez Zagorin writes, Theodosius "proscribed various heresies by name, ordered the confiscation of churches and private houses where heretics met for worship, and deprived them of the right to make wills or receive inheritances. In the case of certain heretical sects [the Manichaeans] he commanded that their members be hunted down and executed. In his attempt to enforce uniformity of belief he also instituted legislation against paganism, including a comprehensive enactment in 395 forbidding anyone of whatever rank of dignity to sacrifice to or worship 'senseless images' constructed 'by human hands', on pain of heavy fines and other penalties. He was likewise the first emperor to impose penalties on Christians who profaned their baptism by reverting to paganism.

²²⁹ Hieromonk Patapios, "On Caution regarding Anathematization", *Orthodox Tradition*, January, 2000, p. 22.

²³⁰ Norwich, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

“... All subjects were expected to be worshippers in this [the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic] Church; and in addition to the spiritual and political authority its bishops wielded, it had the power of the state at its disposal to enforce its faith against heretics. The practical toleration and religious pluralism that had formerly been the Roman custom no longer existed. The change that took place is epitomised in an appeal made in 384 by Quintus Aurelius Symmachus – a Roman senator, orator, and prefect of Rome, and a defender of paganism – to the emperors Theodosius I and Valentinian II to restore the altar of the goddess victory to the Senate House (it had been removed by imperial decree after standing there for over 350 years, since the reign of the emperor Augustus at the beginning of the first century). Speaking in the name of the proscribed ancient religion of Rome, Symmachus declared that ‘each nation has its own gods and peculiar rites. The Great Mystery cannot be approached by one avenue alone... Leave us the symbol on which our oaths of allegiance have been sworn for so many generations. Leave us the system which has given prosperity to the State.’ His plea was of no avail, however, for the cross of Christ had conquered the Roman Empire, and the altar of Victory remained banished and abandoned.”²³¹

Zeal against heretics was, of course, not the exclusive preserve of the emperors. The Christians of Alexandria and the monks of Egypt were famous (or, in some cases, notorious) for their zeal. And when in 388 some Christians burned down the synagogue in Callinicum on the Euphrates, the Emperor Theodosius ordered its rebuilding at the Christians’ expense.

However, St. Ambrose, the famous Bishop of Milan, wrote to him: “When a report was made by the military Count of the East that a synagogue had been burnt down, and that this was done at the instigation of the bishop, you gave command that the others should be punished, and the synagogue be rebuilt by the bishop himself... The bishop’s account ought to have been waited for, for priests are the calmers of disturbances, and anxious for peace, except when even they are moved by some offence against God, or insult to the Church. Let us suppose that the bishop burned down the synagogue... It will evidently be necessary for him to take back his act or become a martyr. Both the one and the other are foreign to your rule: if he turns out to be a hero, then fear lest he end his life in martyrdom; but if he turns out to be unworthy, then fear lest you become the cause of his fall, for the seducer bears the greater responsibility. And what if others are cowardly and agree to construct the synagogue? Then... you can write on the front of the building: ‘This temple of impiety was built on contributions taken from Christians’. You are motivated by considerations of public order. But what is the order from on high? Religion was always bound to have the main significance in the State, which is why the severity of the laws must be modified here. Remember Julian, who wanted to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem: the builders were then burned by the fire of God. Do you not take

²³¹ Zagorin, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 24. However, Hill argues that it was not Theodosius’ measures but Justinian’s persecution in the sixth century that was “the first really thorough attempt on the part of the Roman authorities to stamp out paganism, and the first time that the various laws against paganism were seriously enforced” (*op. cit.*, p. 301).

fright at what happened then?... And how many temples did the Jews not burn down under Julian at Gaza, Askalon, Beirut and other places? You did not take revenge for the churches, but now you take revenge for the synagogue!"²³²

"What is more important," he asked, "the parade of discipline or the cause of religion? The maintenance of civil law is secondary to religious interest."²³³ Ambrose refused to celebrate the Liturgy until the imperial decree had been revoked. Theodosius backed down...

The "Ambrosean" position may be tentatively formulated as follows. On the one hand, in relation to those outside her the Church can herself adopt no coercive measures; she can do no more than reason, plead and threaten with *God's* justice at the Last Judgement. Her only means of "coercion", if it can be called that, is the excommunication of unrepentant Christians from her fold. On the other hand, the Church blesses the Christian State to use other, more physical means of coercion against those over whom she has no more influence. The purpose of this is not to *convert*; for only persuasion can convert, and as St. Basil the Great says, "by violence you can frighten me, but cannot persuade me". But there are other legitimate and Christian purposes for coercion: justice against evildoers, the restriction of their influence, and the protection of the young and weak in mind...

But even St. Ambrose never advocated the *execution* of heretics or Jews. This aversion against the execution of heretics is found in other saints. Thus when St. Martin of Tours (+397) signed the decision of a Synod condemning the Spanish heretic Priscillian and handing him over to the Emperor for execution, he felt the reproaches of his conscience, and never again attended a Synod of Bishops.²³⁴

However, we cannot say that the execution of heretics is *absolutely* forbidden by Orthodoxy... In the *Lives of the Saints* we find a few instances of saints blessing the execution of heretics, even of saints who were not secular rulers executing evildoers themselves. Thus in *The Acts of the Apostles* we read how the Apostle Peter in effect executed Ananias and Sapphira. Again, the Apostles Peter and Paul by their prayers brought about the death of Simon Magus. Again, St. Basil the Great prayed for, and obtained, the death of Julian the Apostate (by the sword of St. Mercurius the Great Martyr). And the holy hierarchs Patrick of Ireland and Leo of Catania in effect executed particularly stubborn perverters of the people.

Probably none of the early Fathers exercised himself more over the question of religious freedom than St. Augustine of Hippo. Zagorin writes: "Augustine carried on a long theological combat with three formidable heresies, Manichaeism, Pelagianism, and Donatism. Among his writings against the

²³² St. Ambrose, *Letter 40*, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 69.

²³³ Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, London: Phoenix, 1987, 1995, p. 164.

²³⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Life of St. Martin of Tours*. St. Ambrose of Milan and Bishop Siricus of Rome also protested the execution (Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-295).

last of these and its followers, the Donatists, he left an invaluable record of his reflections on the justification of coercion against heretics to enforce religious truth. At the time he became bishop of Hippo, Donatism, which took its name from one of its first leaders, Donatus, bishop of Carthage, had already existed in North Africa for more than eighty years and had undergone considerable persecution. Originating in the early fourth century in an ecclesiastical controversy over a bishop who had [allegedly] compromised with paganism during the persecution by the emperor Diocletian and was therefore considered a betrayer of the faith, the Donatists formed a schismatic and rival church with its own clergy. Rigorists who believed in a church composed exclusively of the holy, they maintained that an unworthy priest could not perform a valid sacrament. By insisting on the rebaptism of converts, the Donatist church declared its rejection of the sacramental character of Catholic baptism. To some extent Donatism represented an expression of social protest against the profane world as a domain ruled by Satan. Its more extreme advocates, a fanatical fringe of zealots and ascetics known as Circumcellions, sought a martyr's death by any means, including suicide; they gathered as bands of marauding peasants who attacked estates and committed other acts of violence. As a self-described church of martyrs, the Donatists condemned the alliance between Catholicism and the Roman authorities as a renunciation of Christ in favour of Caesar, and their bishop Donatus was reported to have said, 'What has the Emperor to do with the Church?' In the course of its history Donatism became a considerable movement, although it remained largely confined to North Africa.

"In his numerous writings against this heresy, one of Augustine's constant aims was to persuade its followers by means of reason and arguments to abandon their errors and return to the Catholic Church. He did his best to refute its doctrines in a number of treatises and at first opposed any use of coercion against these heretics. A lost work of 397 repudiated coercion, and in an undated letter to a Donatist churchman he wrote: "I do not intend that anyone should be forced into the Catholic communion against his will. On the contrary, it is my aim that the truth may be revealed to all who are in error and that... with the help of God, it may be made manifest so as to induce all to follow and embrace it of their own accord.'" To several Donatists he wrote in around 398 that those who maintain a false and perverted opinion but without 'obstinate ill will' - and especially those 'who have not originated their error by bold presumption' but received it from their parents or others, and who see truth with a readiness to be corrected when they have found it - are not to be included among heretics. The heretic himself, however, 'swollen with hateful pride and with the assertion of evil contradiction, is to be avoided like a mad man'.

"Nevertheless, Augustine eventually reversed his position and decided to endorse coercion. Looking back at this development some years later, he said that at first he had believed that no one should be forced into the unity of Christ, and that the Church should rely only on speaking, reasoning, and persuasion 'for fear of making pretended Catholics out of those whom we knew as open

heretics'. But then proven facts caused him to give up this opinion when he saw Donatists in his own city 'converted to Catholic unity by the fear of imperial laws' and those in other cities recalled by the same means. Reclaimed Donatists, he contended, were now grateful that 'fear of the laws promulgated by temporal rulers who serve the Lord in fear has been so beneficial' to them.

"We first learn of Augustine's change of mind in the treatise he wrote (ca. 400) as a reply to a letter by the Donatist bishop Parmenian, a leading spokesman of the movement. In this work he justified the intervention of the imperial government against the Donatists by making Saint Paul's theology of the state, as the apostle outlined it in the thirteenth chapter of his letter to the Romans (Romans 13.1-7). There Paul instructed Christians to be obedient to the higher powers as the minister ordained by God and armed with the sword for the repression of evildoers. In the light of this apostolic teaching, Augustine insisted that the emperors and the political authorities had the God-given right and duty to crush the sacrilege and schism of the Donatists, since they were as obligated to repress a false and evil religion as to prevent the crime of pagan idolatry. He further pointed out that the Donatists were guilty of many cruelties and had themselves appealed to the emperors in the past against the dissidents in their own church. Denying that those of them condemned to death were martyrs, he described them instead as killers of souls and, because of their violence, often killers of bodies.

"One of the arguments he put forward in defense of force in this work was his interpretation of Jesus' parable of the tares in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 13.24-30). This famous text was destined to be cited often during subsequent centuries in discussions of toleration and persecution, and to occupy a prominent place in the tolerationist controversies of the era of the Protestant Reformation. The parable first likens the kingdom of heaven to a good seed and then relates how a man sowed good seed in the ground, whereupon his enemy came in the night and planted tares, or weeds, there as well. When the wheat appeared, so did the tares. The man's servants asked their master if they should pull up the tares, but he forbade them lest they also uproot the wheat. He ordered that both should be left to grow until the harvest, and then the reapers would remove and burn the tares and gather the wheat into the barn. The parable's point would seem to be that good people and sinners alike should be allowed to await the Last Judgement to receive their due, when God would reward the good with the kingdom of heaven and punish the bad with the flames of hell. Augustine, however, drew from it a very different lesson: if the bad seed is known, it should be uprooted. According to his explanation, the only reason the master left the tares to grow until the harvest was the fear that uprooting them sooner would harm the grain. When this fear does not exist because it is evident which is the good seed, and when someone's crime is notorious and so execrable that it is indefensible, then it is right to use severe discipline against it, for the more perversity is corrected, the more carefully charity is safeguarded. With the help of this interpretation, which reversed the parable's meaning, Augustine was able not only to justify

the Roman government's repression of the Donatists but to provide a wider reason for religious persecution by the civil authorities.

“Augustine elaborated his position in favour of coercion in religion in a number of letters. In a lengthy epistle to the Donatist Vincent, he argued for the utility of coercion in inducing fear that can bring those who are subject to it to the right way of thinking. Maintaining that people could be changed for the better through the influence of fear, he concluded that ‘when the saving doctrine is added to useful fear’, then ‘the light of truth’ can drive out ‘the darkness of error’. To reinforce this view, he quoted the parable of the feast in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 14. 21-23), another of the texts that was to figure prominently in future tolerationist controversy. In this parable, a man prepared a great feast to which he invited many guests who failed to appear. After summoning from the city the poor, blind, and lame to come and eat, he found that room still remained, so he ordered his servants to ‘go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in [compelle intrare in the Latin Vulgate], that My house may be filled’. ‘Do you think,’ Augustine asked in a comment on this passage, ‘that no one should be forced to do right, when you read that the master of the house said to his servants, “Whomever you find, compel them to come in”’. He referred also to the example of the conversion of the apostle Paul, who ‘was forced by the great violence of Christ’s compulsion to acknowledge and hold the truth’ (Acts 9.3-18). The main point, he claimed, was not whether anyone was forced to do something, but whether the purpose of doing so was right or wrong. While no one could be made good against his will, the fear of punishment could persuade a person to repudiate a false doctrine and embrace the truth he had previously denied, as had happened to many Donatists who had thankfully become Catholics and now detested their diabolical separation.

“In dealing with heresy, Augustine thus laid great stress on what might be called the pedagogy of fear to effect a change of heart. He did not see coercion and free will as opposites in religious choice but claimed that fear plays a part in spontaneous acts of the will and may serve a good end. In one of his most important statements on the subject, contained in a letter of 417 to Boniface, the Roman governor of Africa, he propounded a distinction between two kinds of persecution. ‘[T]here is an unjust persecution,’ he said, ‘which the wicked inflict on the Church of Christ, and ... a just persecution which the Church of Christ inflicts on the wicked.’ The Church persecutes from love, the Donatists from hatred; the Church in order to correct error, the Donatists to hurl men into error. While the Church strives to save the Donatists from perdition, the latter in their fury kill Catholics to feed their passion for cruelty. Augustine was convinced that the coercion of heretics was therefore a great mercy because it rescued them from lying demons so that they could be healed in the Catholic fold. He rejected the objection of those who said that the apostles had never called upon the kings of the earth to enforce religion, since in the apostles’ time there had been no Christian emperor to whom they could appeal. It was necessary and right, however, for kings to forbid and restrain with religious

severity actions contrary to God's commandments, and to serve God by sanctioning laws that commanded goodness and prohibited its opposite.

"While admitting that it was better to lead people to the worship of God by teaching than to force them through fear of suffering, Augustine nevertheless averred that the latter way could not be neglected. Experience proved, he claimed, that for many heretics it had been a blessing to be driven out by fear of bodily pain to undergo instruction in the truth and then follow up with actions what they had learned in words. Schismatics, he noted, protested that men have freedom to believe or not to believe, and that Christ never used force on anyone. To this objection he countered with his previous argument that Christ had first compelled Paul to cease his persecution of the Christian Church by striking him blind at his conversion and only then taught him. 'It is a wonderful thing,' he said, 'how he [Paul] who came to the gospel under the compulsion of bodily suffering labored more in the gospel than all the others who were called by words alone.' Once again he drew on the injunction compelle intrare in the Gospel of Luke to affirm that the Catholic Church was in accord with God when it compelled heretics and schismatics to come in. In other letters he denied that the 'evil will' should be left to its freedom, and cited not only this same parable and the example of Christ's compulsion of Paul, but also God's restraint of the Israelites from doing evil and compelling them to enter the land of promise (Exodus 15.22-27), as proof of the Church's justice in using coercion.

"Although after his change of mind Augustine consistently approved the policy of subjecting heretics to coercion, he never desired that they should be killed. In writing to Donatists, he often stated that he and his brethren loved them and acted for their good, and that if they hated the Catholic Church, it was because 'we do not allow you to go astray and be lost'. Donatists had been subject to previous imperial legislation against heresy, but between 405 and 410 the emperor Honorius decreed a number of heavy penalties against them that put them outside the protection of the law for their seditious actions; he ordered their heresy to be put down in 'blood and proscription'. Augustine frequently interceded with the Roman authorities to spare their lives. In 408 he wrote to the proconsul of Africa urging Christian clemency and praying that though heretics [should] be made to feel the effect of the laws against them, they should not be put to death, despite deserving the extreme punishment, in the hope that they might be converted. To another high official he pleaded in behalf of some Donatists tried for murder and other violent acts that they should be deprived of their freedom but not executed that they might have the chance to repent.

"Although repression weakened Donatism, it failed to eliminate this deeply rooted heresy, which survived until the later seventh century when the Islamic conquest of North Africa destroyed every form of Christianity in this region. In the course of his career, Augustine, who was not only an outstanding thinker but a man of keen and sensitive conscience, wrestled strenuously with the problem of heresy and the achievement of Catholic unity by the use of

coercion... 'Pride', he once wrote, 'is the mother of all heretics,' and fear could break down this pride and thus act as an auxiliary in the process of conversion. Whether the heretic was really sincere in professing a change of mind under the threat of bodily pain was a question that could best be left to God. Augustine certainly did not recommend the death penalty for heretics but strove tirelessly to save their souls from eternal perdition. He supported their repression by the Roman imperial government in the hope of restoring them to the Catholic Church, and because, as he said in a letter to some Donatists, 'nothing can cause more complete death to the soul than freedom to disseminate error'."²³⁵

6. Rome and the Non-Roman World

Constantine not only renewed the empire from within: he transformed the very ideology of empire, and the relationship of Rome to other kingdoms and empires.

The pagan Roman empire was founded on the familiar fallen passions of love of glory and love of power. Excuses were found for invading neighbouring territories; many innocent "barbarians" were killed, and their lands and property plundered. Nations that resisted Roman power, such as the Carthaginians and the Jews, were treated with vengeful cruelty; and Julius Caesar's extraordinarily bloody conquest of Gaul may serve as an example of how the Roman empire was typically expanded.

Constantine tried to change this bloody tradition. Although an experienced and highly successful soldier himself, who did not flinch from extreme measures when he considered them necessary, he glorified peace rather than war, Christ rather than himself or Rome, and while defending the boundaries of the empire, undertook no offensive campaigns beyond them. The one apparent exception to this rule only goes to prove that the imperial ideology really had changed.

The apparent exception was Persia, the age-old rival of Rome in the East, which had deeply humiliated Rome by defeating and capturing the Emperor Valerius in 260, and against which Constantine was preparing an expedition when he died in 337.

"Constantine's abortive Persian conquest," writes Leithart, "looks like another Roman adventure driven by sacrificial frenzy, vengeance and a desire to keep enemies in their subordinate place. Yet there are hints that between 306 and the 330s something had changed. Sometime before, Constantine had written a 'tactful, allusive, and indirect' letter in his own hand to Shapur. Addressing the Persian king as a 'brother', he summarized the 'most holy religion' that had given him 'deeper acquaintance with the most holy God'. Finding common ground with nonsacrificial Persian Zoroastrian practice,

²³⁵ Zagorin, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-32, 33.

Constantine emphasized that the 'God I invoke with bended knees' is horrified by 'the blood of sacrifices' and recoils from 'their foul and detestable odors.' The sacrifice he craves is 'purity of mind and an undefiled spirit' that manifests itself in 'works of moderation and gentleness'. 'He loves the meek,' Constantine continued, 'and hates the turbulent spirit.... While the arrogant and haughty are utterly overthrown, he requites the humble and forgiving with deserved rewards.'

"The purpose of the letter was to advise Shapur about how to deal with the sizable Christian community in his own realm. Constantine was an eyewitness of 'the end of those who lately harassed the worshippers of God by their impious edicts,' and he warned Shapur not to follow their example. Everything is 'best and safest' when men follow God's laws and recognize that God is at work through the church, endeavouring to 'gather all men to himself'. He expressed his joy at hearing that Persia was full of Christians, and he closed the letter with a prayer that 'you and they may enjoy abundant prosperity, and that your blessings and theirs may be in equal measure,' so that 'you will experience the mercy and favor of that God who is the Lord and Father of all.'

"Constantine's letter has been called a 'veiled warning' and has been interpreted as a provocation, a threat and a sign of his belief that as Roman emperor he had responsibility for all Christians. Constantine's Persian policies certainly backfired. He initiated his final campaign when a delegation from Armenia visited Constantinople in 336 to ask him for assistance against a Persian coup. Since the conversion of the Armenian king Trdat (Tiridates) in 314, Armenia had been officially Christian, more explicitly so than was the Roman Empire under Constantine. In the 330s, Persians under Shapur II had invaded, captured and blinded the Armenian King Tirhan, and placed Shapur's brother Narseh on the Armenian throne. Constantine responded swiftly. He designated his nephew Hannibalianus as 'king of kings' and gave him authority over Armenia and Pontus. Like his letter, his preparations for war with Persia were intended, among other things, to defend a Christian people. When Constantine died before the campaign could be launched, Shapur, apparently suspicious that the Christians of Persia were allied with Rome, initiated a violent persecution. Persian Christians, in response, kept themselves aloof from the dominant orthodoxy of the West.

"Yet I cannot agree that the letter to Shapur was intended as a provocation. Constantine warned Shapur, but he warned him of divine judgement, not that he would personally take vengeance if Shapur were to attack Christians. In the closing section Constantine issued an altar call, inviting Shapur to protect Christians and to join him in worship of the high God, the God of the Christians. Hermann Dorries summarizes the message of the letter as an invitation to share in the blessing of Christianization: 'what the true faith had done for the Roman Empire,' Constantine urged, 'it would do also for the Persian.' It was an unprecedented diplomatic move - a Roman emperor who 'attributed his success to heavenly assistance... invited his only formidable enemy to share in this aid.' More broadly, the letter reveals how far Constantine

had moved from tetrarchic political theology. For Diocletian 'religion and nation meant the same thing,' but for Constantine there was a potential unity, even between East and West, even between Persia and Rome, that transcended boundaries and national interests..."²³⁶

This is an insightful and true remark, and if anything underestimates the revolutionary character of Constantine's new imperial ideology. Pagan religion and politics was irredeemably *particularist*. The pagan gods protected particular men and cities or states against other men, cities and states that were protected by other gods. And if pagan Rome had a policy of including as many local gods as possible into its "pantheon" (which means "all gods"), this did not alter the fundamentally particularist nature of its religion. Christianity was difficult to absorb within this structure not only because the Christians refused to sacrifice to the pagan gods, but also because their God was of a totally different kind - universal, completely all-encompassing, and infinitely above everything that can be called "god", "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1.21). Moreover, this God claimed dominion not only over Rome but also over all the kingdoms of men...

When Constantine came to power, being a sincere, determined and deeply thoughtful Christian, he sought to adapt the Roman political theology to its new God, making it truly *universalist*. Scornfully rejecting all divine honours for himself, he sought to subdue himself and all his subjects to the true King of kings. But this also transformed his relationship with other kings, such as Shapur of Persia. For Shapur, too, had been given his dominion by God, making him and Constantine no longer rivals, but "brothers", as Constantine himself put it - if not in Christ, at any rate as political rulers established by God. But this had the further consequence that extension of the empire by the former rapacious methods was no longer acceptable. Only if Shapur maltreated his Christian subjects or other Christians, such as the Armenians, could Constantine intervene to defend his brothers in Christ on the assumption that Shapur had now ceased to be his brother in kingship, having "disestablished" himself from God.

But where did this leave the Roman empire? No longer unique, but just one kingdom among many?

Not quite. If all legitimate political authorities have been established as such by God, and there is no genuine authority that has not been thus established (Romans 13.1), this would appear to place all authorities essentially on the same level. But the Roman empire remained unique in that Christ had been born in it and God had chosen the empire also to be the birthplace and seed-plot of His Church. This gave it a certain uniqueness, seniority and prestige in the eyes of all Christians, even those who lived in other polities and therefore owed obedience to other authorities, thereby making it in this sense *the universal*

²³⁶ Leithart, op. cit., pp. 246-247.

empire. But this did not mean that the empire was destined to become *the universal ruler of all nations*, as some later Byzantines tended to think: it meant that the Roman empire would be, as long as it lasted, the “first among equals” among Christian states, and therefore the object of *universal veneration* by the Christians of all nations.

Another consequence of this theology was that the Roman empire had a special obligation to spread the Gospel to other kingdoms and nations, to be *missionary*. And Constantine, as always, was fully alive to this consequence. As Leithart writes, he “had a deep sense of historical destiny, and as a result his foreign policy was guided in part by the desire to extend the church’s reach. He envisioned a universal empire united in confession of the Nicene Creed, an empire that would have a symbolic center in the Church on Golgotha in Jerusalem and that would stretch to India and Ethiopia and someday include even Persia. But Constantine did not necessarily regard annexation into the Roman empire as an essential element of that vision. He seems instead to have envisioned a Christian commonwealth. Perhaps the empire would have remained dominant, but in Constantine’s cosmopolitan mind it would not have been coextensive with ‘Christ’s dominion’.

“Though he probably did not impose Christianity on conquered Goths, his triumphs among the Goths assisted the spread of Christianity. After his victory in 332, Bishop Ulfila was consecrated and sent as a missionary in Gothic territory. Churches were also established in the ‘Mountain Arena’, the Arab territories that served as a buffer between the empire and Persia. Eusebius mentions Arab Christian communities, and there was an Arab bishop at the council of Nicaea. Further east in Iberia (Georgia) [where St. Nina evangelized] there were Christians, and to the south Ethiopia (Aksum) also became Christian under Ezana. As already noted, Armenia became officially Christian shortly after Constantine defeated Maxentius. By the time he died, Constantine had left behind a ‘universal Christian commonwealth embracing Armenians, Iberians, Arabs, and Aksumites’ that continued to take form under his Byzantine successors. This was *not*, it should be noted, an extension of Roman governance; it is rather that Roman imperial order had been reshaped, to some degree, by the demands of Christian mission...”²³⁷

Conclusion

St. Constantine died at Pentecost, 337, shortly after receiving Holy Baptism. Rome and the whole “inhabited world” had been baptized through him, receiving true renewal of spirit. And now the baptizer himself was baptized, receiving inner rebirth to the Kingdom that is not of this world.

Why did he leave his baptism so late? Was it because ruling the empire involved committing so much violence and injustice that he had to put off baptism until as late as possible? Possibly...

²³⁷ Leithart, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

However, Constantine's actions at the very end can be seen as a kind of final sermon and testament in symbolical language. Thus after his baptism he put off the imperial purple, never to put it on again – for the kingdoms of this world pass away, never to return. But then he put on the shining white baptismal robe, never to take it off again – for the Kingdom of God abides forever...

July 17/30, 2015.

15. THE ORIGENISM OF METROPOLITAN KALLISTOS

Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia is a well-known ecumenist. However, up to now his ecumenism has embraced only heretics, such as Nestorius, who have posed problems for the ecumenical goal of the union of all Christians. Now he proposes to rehabilitate Origen, whose teaching makes the ecumenical movement unnecessary – for it asserts that everybody will be saved, whatever happens.

Kallistos claims that while some passages of Holy Scripture clearly teach that many will burn in the flames of gehenna for ever and ever, there are others which promise the salvation of all. “It is important, therefore, to allow for the complexity of the Scriptural evidence. It does not all point in the same direction, but there are two contrasting strands. Some passages present us with a *challenge*. God invites but does not compel. I possess freedom of choice: am I going to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the divine invitation? The future is uncertain. To which destination am I personally bound? Might I perhaps be shut out from the wedding feast? But there are other passages which insist with equal emphasis upon *divine sovereignty*. God cannot be ultimately defeated. ‘All shall be well’, and in the end God will indeed be ‘all in all’. Challenge and sovereignty: such are the two strands in the New Testament, and neither strand should be disregarded.”²³⁸

And yet Ware clearly believes in the second strand, and not the first. The first group of quotations he calls “challenging” – because they clearly state that many will be damned for ever. As for the second, much smaller group, this he misinterprets.

Let us take I Corinthians 15.28: “When all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will be subject to Him Who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” St. John Chrysostom understands this passage as follows: “What is: ‘that God may be all in all’? That all things may be dependent on Him, that nobody may suppose two beginningless authorities, nor another kingdom separated off; that is, that nothing may exist independent of Him.”²³⁹ There is nothing here about universal salvation... Again, Blessed Theodoret writes: “In the future life, when corruption has come to an end and immortality been given, there will be no place for the passions, and after the final expulsion of the passions not one form of sin will have any effect. Then God will dwell in everyone in a fuller, more perfect way.”²⁴⁰ So the Divine sovereignty is expressed, not in the salvation of all men, but in the complete sanctification and deification of that *minority* of mankind who will be saved.

²³⁸ Ware, “Dare we hope for the salvation of all?” in *The Inner Kingdom*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000, p. 197.

²³⁹ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 39*, P.G. 61:372.

²⁴⁰ Bishop Theophan the Recluse, *Tolkovanie Poslanij sv. Apostola Pavla* (Interpretation of the Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul), Moscow, 2002, p. 208.

Ware's other "salvation of all" quotation is Romans 11.32: "God has imprisoned all in disobedience, that He may be merciful to all". But St. John Chrysostom writes: "'God has imprisoned all in disobedience'. That is, He brought them to the proof. He showed them forth as disobedient; but not in order that they might remain in disobedience, but that He might save the one [the Jews] through its rivalry with the other [the Gentiles] - the former through the latter, and the latter through the former."²⁴¹ Again, the Apostle is not speaking here about universal salvation, but about how God in His wonderful Providence uses the rivalry between the Jews and the Gentiles in order to save as many as possible from both.

Ware now turns from Scripture to Church history, and discusses Origen, whose teaching on the apocatastasis, or restoration of all things and all men, was anathematized at the Fifth Ecumenical Council as follows: "If anyone maintains the mythical pre-existence of souls, and the monstrous apocatastasis that follows from this, let him be anathema." This should be enough for anyone who believes in the authority of the Seven Ecumenical Councils: the doctrine of apocatastasis is heretical and under anathema. But Ware tries to get round this by pointing out that the anathema "does not only speaks about apocatastasis but links together two aspects of Origen's theology: first, his speculations about the beginning, that is to say, about the pre-existence of souls and the pre-cosmic fall; second, his teaching about the end, about universal salvation and the ultimate reconciliation of all things. Origen's eschatology is seen as following directly from his protology, and both are rejected together... Suppose, however, that we separate his eschatology from his protology; suppose that we abandon all speculations about the realm of eternal logikoi [rational intellects existing prior to the conception of the eternal world]; suppose that we simply adhere to the standard Christian view whereby there is no pre-existence of the soul, but each new person comes into being as an integral unity of soul and body, at... the moment of the conception of the embryo within the mother's womb. In this way we could advance a doctrine of universal salvation - affirming this, not as a logical certainty (indeed, Origen never did that), but as a heartfelt aspiration, a visionary hope - which would avoid the circularity of Origen's view and so would escape the condemnation of the anti-Origen anathemas."²⁴²

However, Ware's and Origen's "visionary hope" is dashed by the sober and penetrating vision of the faith of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. First, the Fifth Ecumenical Council calls Origen's doctrine of apocatastasis "monstrous" - which it would hardly do if it were true in itself, independently of the teaching of the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls. This being the case, the "visionary hope" of universal salvation may be "heartfelt" (although "the heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17.9)), but it is undoubtedly *false*, and therefore harmful. Hope that is not based on true faith, but on a false vision of reality, is a form of spiritual deception, and must be rejected. It is possible to

²⁴¹ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 19*, P.G. 60:652.

²⁴² Ware, op. cit., pp. 199-200, 200-201.

“hope against hope”, that is, hope for something that looks impossible according to a secular, scientific point of view but is possible for Almighty God; but to hope against – that is, in direct contradiction to – the doctrines of the faith, can never be justified.

Nothing daunted, Ware continues to expound the Origenist teaching: “The strongest point in Origen’s case for universalism is his analysis of punishment. We may summarize his view by distinguishing three primary reasons that have been advanced to justify the infliction of punishment.

“First, there is the *retributive* argument. Those who have done evil, it is claimed, themselves deserve to suffer in proportion to the evil that they have done. Only so will the demands of justice be fulfilled: ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ (Exodus 21.24). But in the Sermon on the Mount Christ explicitly rejects this principle (Matthew 5.38). If we humans are forbidden by Christ to exact retribution in this way from our fellow humans, how much more should we refrain from attributing vindictive and retributive behaviour to God. It is blasphemous to assert that the Holy Trinity is vengeful. In any case, it seems contrary to justice that God should inflict infinite punishment for what is only a finite amount of wrongdoing.”²⁴³

In accusing others of blasphemy here, Ware undoubtedly falls into blasphemy himself. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord forbids men to take vengeance because in men the laudable desire for justice is mixed with the sinful passion of hatred. But God is able to do what men cannot do, with perfect freedom from sinful passion. That is why “vengeance is *Mine*, saith the Lord; *I* will repay” – an Old Testament text (Deuteronomy 32.35) that is twice quoted by New Testament authors (Romans 12.19; Hebrews 10.30). In saying that the Orthodox who believe in eternal torments “attribute vindictive and retributive behaviour to God”, Ware slanders the Orthodox by confusing the sinful passion of “vindictiveness” with the laudable longing for “retribution”, the natural and God-implanted desire that everybody should get their just deserts in the end.

As for Ware’s argument that finite sins do not merit infinite punishment, we are tempted to ask: “Shall mortal man be more just than God?” (Job 4.17). How can Ware dare to contest the judgement of God? In any case, St. John Chrysostom writes: - “Do not say to me, ‘How is the balance of justice preserved if the punishment has no end?’ When God does something, obey His demand and do not submit what has been said to human reasoning. In any case, is it not in fact just that one who has received countless good things from the beginning, has then done things worthy of punishment, and has not reformed in response either to threats or to kindness, should be punished? If it is justice you are after, we ought all on the score of justice to have perished at the very outset. Indeed even that would have fallen short of the measure of mere justice. For if a man insults someone who never did him any wrong, it is a matter of justice that he

²⁴³ Ware, op. cit., p. 203.

be punished. But what if he insults his Benefactor, Who without having received any favour from him in the first place, has done countless things for him - in this case the One Who was the sole source of his existence, Who is God, Who endowed him with a soul, Who gave him countless other gifts and purposed to bring him to heaven? If after so many favours, he not only insults Him but insults Him daily by his conduct, can there be any question of deserving pardon?

"Do you not see how He punished Adam for a single sin? 'Yes', you will say, 'but He had given him paradise and made him the recipient of very great kindness.' And I reply that it is not at all the same thing for a man in the tranquil possession of security to commit a sin and for a man in the midst of affliction to do so. The really terrible thing is that you sin when you are not in paradise but set amidst the countless evils of this present life, and that all this misery has not made you any more sensible. It is like a man who continues his criminal behaviour in prison. Moreover you have the promise of something even greater than paradise. He has not given it to you yet, so as not to make you soft at a time when there is a struggle to be fought, but neither has He been silent about it, lest you be cast down by all your labours.

"Adam committed one sin, and brought on total death. We commit a thousand sins every day. If by committing a single sin he brought such terrible evil on himself and introduced death into the world, what should we, who live continually in sin, expect to suffer - we who in place of paradise have the expectation of heaven? This is a burdensome message; it does upset the man who hears it. I know, because I feel it myself. I am disturbed by it; it makes me quake. The clearer the proofs I find of this message of hell, the more I tremble and melt with fear. But I have to proclaim it so that we may not fall into hell. What you received was not paradise or trees and plants, but heaven and the good things in the heavens. He who had received the lesser gift was punished and no consideration exempted him; we have been given a greater calling and we sin more. Are we not bound to suffer things beyond all remedy?

"Consider how long our race has been subject to death on account of a single sin. More than five thousand years have passed and the death due to a single sin has not yet been ended. In Adam's case we cannot say that he had heard prophets or that he had seen others being punished for their sins so that he might reasonably have been afraid and learnt prudence if only from the example of others. He was the first and at that time the only one; yet he was still punished. But you cannot claim any of these things. You have had numerous examples, but you only grow worse; you have been granted the great gift of the Spirit, but you go on producing not one or two or three but countless sins. Do not think that because the sins are committed in one brief moment the punishment therefore will also be a matter of a moment. You can see how it is often the case that men who have committed a single theft or a single act of adultery which has been done in a brief moment of time have had to spend all their lives in prison or in the mines, continually battling with hunger and every kind of death. No one lets them off, or says that since the

crime was committed in a brief moment the punishment should match the crime in the length of time it takes.

"'People do act like that,' you may say, 'but they are men, whereas God is loving towards mankind.' Yes, but even the men who act in this way do not do so out of cruelty but out of love for mankind. So since God is loving to mankind He too will deal with sin in this way. 'As great as is His mercy, so great also is His reproof' (Sirach 16.12). So when you speak of God as loving towards mankind, you are actually supplying me with a further reason for punishment, in the fact that the One against Whom we sin is such as this. That is the point of Paul's words: 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Hebrews 10.31). I ask you to bear with these words of fire. Perhaps, yes, perhaps they may bring you some consolation. What man can punish as God has been known to punish? He caused a flood and the total destruction of the human race; a little later He rained down fire from on high and utterly destroyed them all. What human retribution can compare with that? Do you not recognise that even this case of punishment is virtually endless? Four thousand years have passed and the punishment of the Sodomites is still in full force. As His loving kindness is great, so also is His punishment..."²⁴⁴

Ware continues: "The second line of [Origen's] argument insists upon the need for a *deterrent*. It is only the prospect of hell-fire, it is said, that holds us back from evil-doing. But why then, it may be asked, do we need an unending, everlasting punishment to act as an effective deterrent? Would it not be sufficient to threaten prospective malefactors with a period of painful separation from God that is exceedingly prolonged, yet not infinite? In any case, it is only too obvious, especially in our day, that the threat of hell-fire is almost totally ineffective as a deterrent. If in our preaching of the Christian faith, we hope to have any significant influence on others, then what we need is not a negative but a positive strategy: let us abandon ugly threats, and attempt rather to evoke people's sense of wonder and their capacity for love."²⁴⁵

Again, Ware's lack of agreement with the Holy Fathers is evident. St. John Chrysostom says: "I have to proclaim hell so that we may not fall into it." But Ware, giving in to the prevailing *Zeitgeist*, prefers to talk about love - although love without justice is mere sentimentality. The truth is that he does not want to preach hell because he does not believe in it; it is no deterrent for him, so he cannot try and make it a deterrent for others. But the true pastor is called to preach "in season and out of season", whether people want to hear his message or not. And if he has real faith, and the fire of the Holy Spirit, then his word about the fire of gehenna *will* be believed.

Ware goes on: "There remains the *reformativ*e understanding of punishment, which Origen considered to be the only view that is morally acceptable.

²⁴⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily IX on Corinthians*, 1-3.

²⁴⁵ Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-204.

Punishment, if it is to possess moral value, has to be not merely retaliatory or dissuasive but remedial. When parents inflict punishment on their children, or the state on criminals, their aim should always be to heal those whom they punish and to change them for the better. And such, according to Origen, is precisely the purpose of the punishments inflicted upon us by God; He acts always 'as our physician'. A doctor may sometimes be obliged to employ extreme measures which cause agony to his patients. (This was particularly so before the use of anaesthetics.) He may cauterize a wound or amputate a limb. But this is always done with a positive end in view, so as to bring about the patients' eventual recovery and restoration to health. So it is with God, the physician of our souls. He may inflict suffering upon us, both in this life and after our death; but always He does this out of tender love and with a positive purpose, so as to cleanse us from our sins, to purge and heal us. In Origen's words, 'The fury of God's vengeance avails to the purging of our souls'.

"Now, if we adopt this reformatory and therapeutic view of punishment – and this is the only reason for inflicting punishment that can worthily be attributed to God – then surely such punishments should not be unending. If the aim of punishment is to heal, then once the healing has been accomplished there is no need for the punishment to continue. If, however, the punishment is supposed to be everlasting, it is difficult to see how it can have any remedial or educative purpose. In a never-ending hell there is no escape and therefore no healing, and so the infliction of punishment in such a hell is pointless and immoral. This third understanding of punishment, therefore, is incompatible with the notion of perpetual torment in hell; it requires us, rather, to think in terms of some kind of purgatory after death. But in that case this purgatory should be envisaged as a house of healing, not a torture chamber; as a hospital, not a prison. Here, in his grand vision of God as the cosmic physician, Origen is at his most convincing..."²⁴⁶

In other words, according to Origen and Ware, there is no such thing as retributive justice in God: His justice is at all times purely reformatory or pedagogical or therapeutic. As Ware writes: "His justice is nothing other than His love. When He punishes, His purpose is not to requite but to heal."²⁴⁷ But if there is no such thing as just desert or requital, even the concept of mercy makes no sense. For mercy does not involve the rejection of the profoundly scriptural principle that *sin must be paid for* in one way or another, by one person or another, and that *what we sow we must reap*. If the concept of just desert did not exist, then it would make no sense for a sinner to say: "I have sinned; I deserve to be punished". Repentance would be impossible.

The Christian attitude, that of the Prodigal Son, is to recognize the claims of justice while pleading for mercy "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no longer worthy to be called Thy son. Make me as one of Thy hired servants." (Luke 15.18-19). The son recognized the claims of justice,

²⁴⁶ Ware, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-205.

²⁴⁷ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

which required that he be demoted from the status of sonship. And the Father had mercy on him, restoring him to sonship, *precisely because* the son recognized that he was not worthy of it, because he recognized the claims of justice. The same is true of the good thief on the cross, who was forgiven because *he recognized that he was being justly punished*. Thus his recognition of retributive justice was the condition of his punishment becoming pedagogical and therapeutic... It follows that mercy is possible only *in and through* the recognition of justice. But to abolish justice by identifying it with love is to abolish repentance and therefore the possibility of salvation...

The philosopher Immanuel Kant, though also a heretic, was much closer to the truth than Origen in this respect. He wrote: "Judicial punishment can never be used merely as a means to promote some other good for the criminal himself or for civil society, but instead it must in all cases be imposed on him only on the ground that he has committed a crime."²⁴⁸ In other words, if the guilty are not punished, justice is not done; crime is punished because that is *just*, not because it is therapeutic or useful. This is not an argument against mercy or clemency (or therapy). It is an argument that mercy *makes no sense* if the prior claims of justice are not recognized...

To identify the concepts of "justice" and "love" is radically to distort the meaning of two of the most important words in the vocabulary of theology. St. John of the Ladder writes that God "is called *justice* as well as *love*."²⁴⁹ Now this statement would have no weight if "justice" and "love" were identical in God. It has weight because it tells us that there are in God two moral principles or energies that cannot be identified with each other, and of which the one cannot be reduced to the other.²⁵⁰ God is always and in all things supremely just and righteous. He is also supremely merciful and loving. But His mercy does not contradict His justice. It only seems to – to those who do not understand the mystery of the Cross. But on the Cross "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 84.10): that is to say, on the Cross Christ *took on Himself* the whole burden of the just punishment of sinners, thereby making it possible for Him to have mercy on all and restore peace between God and man while satisfying the claims of justice. As a result, all those justly imprisoned in hades since the time of the fall were released and restored again to Paradise. This was the triumph of love – but *in and through* the triumph of justice...

²⁴⁸ Kant, *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*.

²⁴⁹ St. John of the Ladder, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 24.23.

²⁵⁰ The distinction between the two principles is particularly clear in this text from St. Ephraim the Syrian: "Weigh our repentance, that it may outbalance our crimes! But not in even balance, ascends either weight; for our crimes are heavy and manifold, and our repentance is light. He had commanded that we should be sold for our debt: His mercy became our advocate; principle and increase, we repaid with the farthing, which our repentance proffered. Ten thousand talents for that little payment, our debt He forgave us. He was bound to exact it, that He might appease His justice: He was constrained again to forgive, that He might make His grace to rejoice. Our tears for the twinkling of an eye we gave Him; He satisfied His justice, in exacting and taking a little; He made His grace to rejoice, when for a little He forgave much." (*The Nisibene Hymns*).

The element of truth in Ware's argument is that in His Providence towards us God very often does mix punishment with therapy, justice with healing. In this way He gives men the opportunity and the time to repent, administering chastisements that bring sinners to see the error of their ways. Indeed, it is the true sons of God who receive the most "therapeutical punishment": "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Hebrews 12.5-6).

But the therapy succeeds only if the sinner comes to see that he is being *justly punished* for his sins. Moreover, the opportunity to repent through suffering is not offered forever; "for why should you continue to be struck, since you continue in lawlessness?" (Isaiah 1.5). The time for repentance is strictly limited to this earthly life; "for in death there is none that is mindful of Thee, and in hades who will confess Thee?" (Psalms 6.4). After death, we cannot be saved by repentance, but only by the prayers of the Church, which God does not allow to be offered for all men (Ezekiel 14.14; I John 5.16)...

In any case, at the very end "there will be time (as we know it) no longer" (Revelation 10.6). So there will also no longer be change. For time is the medium of change and therefore of repentance...

The deeply disturbing fact is that God in His omniscience knows that many people *would not repent* even if given ages of ages in which to do so. So when He brings the life of a sinner to an end, this indicates that He knows that he will not repent... In the fact that some men will not repent lies the mystery of human freedom, the freedom to say "yes" or "no" to God. Ware acknowledges the mystery of human freedom, and admits that the argument from freedom is a strong one - stronger, in his opinion, than that of Divine justice, which he dismisses completely. And yet he prefers the witness of Origen and one or two of the Holy Fathers to the overwhelming consensus of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church to the effect that some men - many men - will use their freedom to say "no" to God forever...

2013; revised August 3/16, 2015 and July 10/23, 2016.

16. ISLAMIC TERRORISM AND WESTERN ECUMENISM

Aristotle once said that the last virtue of a dying civilization is tolerance. Certainly, this is the only virtue – if it is a virtue – that our undoubtedly dying civilization can pride itself on. Only we like to call it “compassion”... David Cameron, Prime Minister of Great Britain, yesterday spoke about the “extraordinarily compassionate” country that Britain supposedly is. Other national leaders are weighing in to the compassion competition. Mr. (or Mrs.) Compassion in Europe appears to be Germany’s Angela Merkel. A contender for the global crown is Australia.²⁵¹

However, tolerance is not compassion. Nor is it a virtue. Self-restraint, patience, long-suffering – these are virtues. But tolerance as the modern world understands it – that is, the refusal to rebuke or in any way fight against a vast array of false teachings – is not only not a virtue, but a serious vice. The word is not even found in the New Testament.

However, intolerance of evil teaching is both found and praised in the New Testament. Consider the following sayings of the Lord to the Seven Churches of Asia: - “This you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” (Revelation 2.6). “I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam...” (2.14). “Nevertheless, I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants” (2.20). “Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (3.15).

The usual reply to this on the part of ecumenists who pride themselves on their tolerance of evil is: “So you want to torture and kill heretics and dissenters? You want the Inquisition back?” But of course intolerance of evil by no means entails *violence* towards evildoers. It is the secular authorities who exercise a monopoly of violence in our society – and rightly so. The ordinary citizen is not called to do violence to evildoers.

But he is called to *oppose* evil. And this is just what our society does not do. In fact, it is extremely *intolerant of opposition to evil*. Whether we are speaking of evil doctrines (such as atheism or heresy or false religions such as Islam) or evil acts (such as homosexuality or abortion), our society condemns any open opposition to them, and those who oppose them or simply refuse to praise them or take part in them are increasingly liable to be cast into prison or lose their jobs, or at the very least be ostracized or reviled...

But now the ecumenists and liberals have come up against a serious problem. By the Providence of God, a large and steadily increasing proportion of all western states with the exception of Japan are now Muslims, whose

²⁵¹ Miranda Devine, “We are champions in compassion. Stop talking us down,” http://blogs.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/mirandadevine/index.php/dailytelegraph/comments/we_are_champions_in_compassion_stop_talking_us_down/

intolerance of western tolerance of evil poses a difficult dilemma for western politicians. Since the Muslims are numerous and well-organized – too numerous and too well-organized to be repressed in the way traditional Christians are now being repressed – they have to be appeased; there is no other way. Thus the archbishop of Canterbury has even suggested allowing Muslims to live by Sharia law in Britain.

In any case, the ecumenists and liberals have preached for so long that they are tolerant of all religions and faiths that they would look foolish if they began to repress Islam. For liberals have long ago identified the Muslims as a persecuted minority, a mainly coloured minority and a victim-of-western-colonialism minority. Therefore it must be defended at all costs, and especially because it is an enemy of the liberals' greatest enemy, Christianity.²⁵²

And now a fresh development has made this problem still more acute. The civil war in Syria has created four million refugees, large numbers of whom are pouring through Greece and Serbia into Western Europe, most of them headed for Germany – the richest and also, with the possible exception of Sweden, the most liberal and ecumenist state in Europe. Most Europeans do not want these refugees in such large numbers for very good reasons: they do not assimilate, but form Muslim ghettos whose preachers openly call for the destruction of Western Christian civilization and the imposition of sharia law. Numbers of young Western Muslims, even whole families, are joining the fearsome ISIS, which beheads and crucifies Christians, including Christian babies. Even before this recent vast new influx, western security services have been overstretched defending their own citizens from Muslim terrorist plots. Recently David Cameron authorized the execution by drone strike of two ISIS fighters of British nationality in Syria who were plotting terrorist acts in Britain. Fears have been expressed that this recent new influx contains many ISIS warriors disguised as refugees...

Alarmed by these developments, two of the less liberal western countries – Hungary and Slovakia – have expressed the desire to receive only Christian refugees from Syria. This perfectly reasonable demand, which should be characterized not so much as pro-Christian and anti-Muslim discrimination, as *an act of national self-defence*, has been mocked by the more liberal countries of the Union. The German chancellor Angela Merkel, who once said that “multiculturalism isn't working”, has even gone so far as to open the doors of her country to 800,000 new migrants in this year alone (one of her ministers speaks of half a million per year for the next few years). This daughter of a Lutheran pastor and former agitprop member of the East German communist party seems hell-bent on destroying what is left of her country's Christian heritage – while condemning other countries that are less willing to open their gates to the infidels... Of course, Germany has good *economic* reasons for letting in

²⁵² Matt Walsh, “4 Insane Reasons Why Liberals Admire and Romanticize Islam”, *The Blaze*, <http://www.theblaze.com/contributions/4-insane-reasons-why-liberals-admire-and-romanticize-islam>.

Muslims. Her population is declining, she has many empty houses to fill, and the refugees will help German industry. For a country like Britain, however, whose population is rising (largely because of earlier migration) and whose social services are under serious strain even before the current invasion, the situation is quite different... And for anyone who values his nation's Christian heritage, a vast influx of Muslims cannot be welcomed...

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Let us look a little more closely at the roots of Muslim terrorism.

The philosopher Roger Scruton has probed the difference between western and Islamic civilization in an illuminating way.²⁵³ The core religion of the West, Christianity, grew up in the context of the Roman empire, and from the beginning gave the state a certain autonomy in its own sphere. The Christian was obliged to obey the state in all its laws which did not directly contradict the commandment of God: "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's". Although his ultimate loyalty was to God, the Christian was also a citizen of the state, and owed it, too, loyalty. The Christians did not rebel against the State, but gradually worked on its crude mores until it became Christian itself. Then Church and State worked in harmony with each other in a "symphony of powers".

The Church was universal, and had members in many different countries. The State, on the other hand, was territorial, being based on the feeling of a common destiny of all or most of the people on that territory, reinforced by commonalities of language, culture and religion. This dual loyalty - albeit with the prior and absolute loyalty belonging to God alone - was at the basis of Christian civilization. Islam, however, did not encourage the growth of stable territorial nation-states or empires. There were tribes, and there was the universal, global religion, and very little in between. There was *shariah*, the law of Allah, but very little in the way of state law, and certainly nothing comparable to the legal structures created by Constantine or Justinian. The Muslims considered "the People of the Book", the Jews and Christians, to be higher than pagans and therefore entitled to some rights. But there was no such thing as the typically Roman conception of equality under the law for all citizens, regardless of their faith. Not only were non-Muslims in the Muslim state second-class citizens: the whole non-Muslim world outside also belonged by right to Muslims alone.

The Apostles conquered the Mediterranean world by exclusively peaceful means, the preaching of the Word. The Muslims, by contrast, overcame the Romans by fire and sword. (St. Anastasius the Sinaite said that the Romans lost because they had fallen into the heresy of Monothelitism.) However, although Mohammed conquered through violence, not persuasion, he did not proclaim himself a king, still less a Persian-style "king of kings". He was, in his own

²⁵³ Scruton, *The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat*, London, 2002.

estimation and that of his followers, a prophet, the messenger of one of the Arabian pagan deities, the moon-god Allah, whom he proclaimed to be the one true God and whose symbol, the moon-crescent, he took as the symbol of his new religion. In spite of these clearly pagan origins of his faith, Mohammed claimed to abhor every kind of man-worship and idolatry – that is, the old-style politics of the Middle East – in favour of a new, God-centred politics.

And indeed, as Bernard Lewis points out, “the power wielded by the early caliphs [the successors of Mohammed] was very far from the despotism of their predecessors and successors. It was limited by the political ethics of Islam and by the anti-authoritarian habits and traditions of ancient Arabia. A verse attributed to the pre-Islamic Arabic poet ‘Abid ibn al-Abras speaks of his tribe as *‘laqah’*, a word which, according to the ancient commentators and lexicographers, denotes a tribe that has never submitted to a king. ‘Abid’s proud description of his people makes his meaning clear:

*They refused to be servants of kings, and were never ruled by any.
But when they were called on for help in war, they responded gladly.*

“The ancient Arabs, like the ancient Israelites depicted in the books of Judges and Samuel, mistrusted kings and the institution of kingship. They were, indeed, familiar with the institution of monarchy in the surrounding countries, and some were even led to adopt it. There were kings in the states of southern Arabia; there were kings in the border principalities of the north; but all these were in different degrees marginal to Arabia. The sedentary kingdoms of the south used a different language, and were part of a different culture. The border principalities of the north, though authentically Arab, were deeply influenced by Persian and Byzantine imperial practice, and represent a somewhat alien element in the Arab world...

“The early Muslims were well aware of the nature of imperial monarchy as practised in their own day in Byzantium and in Persia, and believed that the state founded by the Prophet and governed after him by his successors the caliphs represented something new and different...”²⁵⁴

In what way was it different? According to Miloslavskaya and Miloslavsky, the difference consisted in the idea that society must be ruled by the commands of Allah, and not by the laws of men, and that the caliphate's secular and spiritual powers (the sultanate and the imamate) are indivisible.²⁵⁵ However,

²⁵⁴ Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East*, London: Phoenix, 1995, pp. 140-141.

²⁵⁵ T. P. Miloslavskaya, G.V. Miloslavsky, “Kontseptsia ‘Islamskogo Edinstva’ i Integratsionnie Protsessy v ‘Musulmanskom Mire’” (“The Conception of ‘Islamic Unity’ and Integrational Processes in ‘the Muslim World’”), in *Islam i Problemy Natsionalizma (Islam and the Problems of Nationalism)*, Moscow: Nauka, 1986, p. 12.

The indivisibility of the caliph’s secular and spiritual powers is emphasized by several other writers. Thus Colin McEvedy writes that “the successors of Mohammed, the Caliphs, combined, as he had, the powers of Emperor and Pope” (*The Penguin Atlas of Medieval History*, London: Penguin, 1961, p. 36). Again, Ninian Smart writes that Islam “demands institutions which cover the whole life of the community. There is nothing in Islam... corresponding to the

this indivisibility of powers resulted in a gradual undermining of the quasi-democratic ideal of early Islam by the reality of the caliphs' almost unlimited power.

On the one hand, the caliphs wanted to create an order in which, "as ideally conceived, there were to be no priests, no church, no kings and no nobles, no privileged orders or castes or estates of any kind, save only for the self-evident superiority of those who accept the true faith to those who wilfully reject it – and of course such obvious natural and social realities as the superiority of man to woman and of master to slave."²⁵⁶ But on the other hand, they were military leaders, and success in war, especially against peoples trained in obedience to autocratic or despotic leaders, required that they should be able to command no less obedience.

In 747, Abu Muslim, a manumitted Persian slave, raised the standard of revolt, defeated the Umayyad caliph and created the Abbasid dynasty. A few years later, Al-Mansur (754-775) moved the capital of the empire to Baghdad, where it came under the influence of Persia with its strong despotic tradition. And so Muslim "democratism" soon passed into a despotism no less fierce than the monarchies that Islam had destroyed. The caliphs of the ninth century, particularly Mamun (813-833), believed their authority to be unlimited. And at the beginning of the eleventh century, the Fatimid ruler Al-Hakim even believed he was god.

"The increasingly authoritarian character of government", writes Lewis, "and the disappointment of successful revolutionaries is vividly expressed in a passage quoted by several classical authors. A certain Sudayf, a supporter of the Abbasids, is cited as complaining of the changes resulting from the fall of the Umayyads and the accession of the Abbasids to the caliphate: 'By God, our booty, which was shared, has become a perquisite of the rich. Our leadership, which was consultative, has become arbitrary. Our succession, which was by the choice of the community, is now by inheritance.'"²⁵⁷

Church. There is no place for a special institution within society devoted to the ends of the faith. For it is the whole of society which is devoted to the ends of the faith" (*The Religious Experience of Mankind*, London: Fontana, 1971, p. 538). Again, Bernard Lewis writes: "It is sometimes said that the caliph was head of State and Church, pope and emperor in one. This description in Western and Christian terms is misleading. Certainly there was no distinction between imperium and sacerdotium, as in the Christian empire, and no separate ecclesiastical institution, no Church, with its own head and hierarchy. The caliphate was always defined as a religious office, and the caliph's supreme purpose was to safeguard the heritage of the Prophet and to enforce the Holy Law. But the caliph had no pontifical or even priestly function... His task was neither to expound nor to interpret the faith, but to uphold and protect it – to create conditions in which his subjects could follow the good Muslim life in this world and prepare themselves for the world to come. And to do this, he had to maintain the God-given Holy Law within the frontiers of the Islamic state, and to defend and, where possible, extend those frontiers, until in the fullness of time the whole world was opened to the light of Islam..." (op. cit., pp. 138-139).

²⁵⁶ Lewis, op. cit., p. 72.

²⁵⁷ Lewis, op. cit., pp. 143-144.

The question whether the caliphate should be elective or hereditary was one of the questions dividing the Sunni from the Shiite Muslims. "The Shia maintained that the caliphate should be hereditary in the line of the Prophet, and therefore that all the caliphs, except only for the brief rule of Ali and of his son Hasan, were usurpers. The more generally accepted view of the Sunni Muslims was that the caliphate was elective, and any member of the Prophet's tribe, Quraysh, was eligible".²⁵⁸ Al-Mansur in Spain made the caliphate there hereditary, but thirty years after his death the people abolished it altogether.

Another of the differences between the Sunnis and the Shiites was that the latter believed in a certain separation between the Church (the imamate) and the State. Thus Karen Armstrong writes: "The doctrine of the *imamate* demonstrated the extreme difficulty of incarnating a divine imperative in the tragic conditions of ordinary political life. Shiites held that every single one of the *imams* had been murdered by the caliph of his day." In 934 it was believed that the last of the imams had been miraculously concealed by God. "The myth of the Hidden Imam... symbolized the impossibility of implementing a truly religious policy in this world, since the caliphs had destroyed Ali's line and driven the *ilm* [the knowledge of what is right] from the earth. Henceforth the Shii *ulama* [learned men, guardians of the legal and religious traditions of Islam] became the representatives of the Hidden Imam, and used their own mystical and rational insights to apprehend his will. Twelver Shiis (who believe in the twelve *imams*) would take not further part in political life, since in the absence of the Hidden Imam, the true leader of the *ummah* [the Muslim community], no government could be legitimate."²⁵⁹

Another reason for the despotism inherent in Islam is the belief that all people are bound to obey Allah, and that those who do not obey - with the partial exceptions of the Jews and Christians - have no right either to life or freedom or property. This, combined with their further beliefs in fatalism and in the automatic entrance of all Muslims that die in the struggle with the unbelievers into the joys of Paradise, made the Muslim armies of the early Arab caliphate, as of the later Turkish sultanate, a formidable expansionary force in world politics. Thus the Koran says: "O believers, make war on the infidels who dwell around you. Let them find firmness in you" (Sura: 9; Ayat: 123). "Fight those who believe not... even if they be People of the Book [Jews and Christians] until they willingly agree to pay the tribute in recognition of their submissive state" (Sura: 9; Ayat: 29). "You will be called to fight a mighty nation; fight them until they embrace Islam" (Sura: 48; Ayat: 16).

As L.A. Tikhomirov wrote: "In submitting without question to God, the Muslim becomes a spreader of the power of God on earth. Everyone is obliged to submit to Allah, whether they want to or not. If they do not submit, then they have no right to live. Therefore the pagans are subject either to conversion to Islam, or to extermination. Violent conversion to Islam, is nothing

²⁵⁸ Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

²⁵⁹ Armstrong, *Islam*, New York: Modern Library, 2002, pp. 67, 68-69.

prejudicial, from the Muslim point of view, for people are obliged to obey God without question, not because they desire it, but because Allah demands this of them."²⁶⁰

Again, as Kenneth Craig writes, holy war, or jihad, "was believed to be the recovery by Islam of what by right belonged to it as the true and final religion but which had been alienated from it by the unbelief or perversity embodied in the minorities whose survival – but no more – it allowed..."²⁶¹

Having this essentially negative attitude to politics, we can see why the Muslims have had such difficulty in establishing stable, loyal attitudes to political authorities, whether Islamic or western. Since the fall of the Ottoman empire in 1918, no political regime, whether nationalist or secularist (Baathist or Kemalist), has arisen in the Middle East that commands the loyalty of all the Islamic peoples. And yet there is no doubt that the Muslims long for a Caliph that will unite them and crush the impious West...

The Islamic religious resurgence can be said to have started with the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979. And in December, 1984 Ayatollah Khomeini said in a speech: "If one allows the infidels to continue playing their role of corrupters on Earth, their eventual moral punishment will be all the stronger. Thus, if we kill the infidels in order to put a stop to their [corrupting] activities, we have indeed done them a service. For their eventual punishment will be less. To allow the infidels to stay alive means to let them do more corrupting. [To kill them] is a surgical operation commanded by Allah the Creator... Those who follow the rules of the Koran are aware that we have to apply the laws of *qissas* [retribution] and that we have to kill... War is a blessing for the world and for every nation. It is Allah himself who commands men to wage war and kill."

Scruton comments: "The element of insanity in these words should not blind us to the fact that they adequately convey a mood, a legacy, and a goal that inspire young people all over the Islamic world. Moreover,... there is no doubt that Khomeini's interpretation of the Prophet's message is capable of textual support, and that it reflects the very confiscation of the political that has been the principal feature of Islamic revolutions in the modern world..."

"... Even while enjoying the peace, prosperity, and freedom that issue from a secular rule of law, a person who regards the *shari'a* as the unique path to salvation may see these things only as the signs of a spiritual emptiness or corruption. For someone like Khomeini, human rights and secular governments display the decadence of Western civilization, which has failed to arm itself against those who intend to destroy it and hopes to appease them instead. The message is that there can be no compromise, and systems that

²⁶⁰ Tikhomirov, *Religiozno-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii* (The Religious-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 296.

²⁶¹ Craig, *The Arab Christian*, London: Mowbrays, 1992, pp. 57-58.

make compromise and conciliation into their ruling principles are merely aspects of the Devil's work.

"Khomeini is a figure of great historic importance for three reasons. First, he showed that Islamic government is a viable option in the modern world, so destroying the belief that Westernization and secularization are inevitable. Second, through the activities of the Hizbullah (Party of Allah) in Lebanon, he made the exportation of the Islamic Revolution the cornerstone of his foreign policy. Third, he endowed the Islamic revival with a Shi'ite physiognomy, so making martyrdom a central part of its strategy."²⁶²

The Islamic Revolution gathered strength during the successful war to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan in 1979-89. Many of the Mujaheddin who fought against the Russians in Afghanistan then went on to fight the Croats and the Serbs in Bosnia in the early 1990s. And then NATO in Afghanistan... The Revolution suffered an apparent setback in the First Iraq War of 1990. However, the result of that war in military terms proved to be less important than its effect in galvanizing Muslim opinion throughout the world against the western "crusaders", who had once again intervened on sacred Muslim soil for purely selfish reasons (oil). These feelings were greatly exacerbated by the Second Iraq War, and by the NATO intervention in Afghanistan. It was not that most Muslims could not see the evil of Saddam Hussein or the Taliban. But as we have seen, such notions as political freedom and human rights mean little to the Muslim mind. Much more important to them is the principle that the followers of the true faith should be able to sort out their problems by themselves without the help of the corrupt infidels. For after all, their ultimate aim is to destroy those same infidels and conquer the world...

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Returning now to the current situation, we may see more clearly how the present confrontation between Western ecumenism and Muslim terrorism is providential. For Muslim terrorism is both a *punishment* of Western ecumenism – a punishment, that is, for its betrayal of the Christian faith and its indifference to the survival of Christian civilization – and a final *appeal* to the conscience of Western Christians to cast off their indifference and acquire zeal for the one true faith, which is Christianity. For even if there is no war between the West and Islam in the next few years, demographic trends, reinforced by Germany's folly in opening her doors to all refugees without examination, will lead to the Muslim dominance of the West within a generation or two. Whether that dominance is achieved through the ballot-box or through knives and bombs hardly matters. The result will be the same.

And let's face it: the Muslims are justified in despising the West's lack of zeal in the defence of its own Christian heritage, and the appalling debauchery of its sexual mores. The Muslim threat will not be neutralized, and Muslims will

²⁶² Scruton, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-120.

not come to see the falsehood of their own faith, - which, after all, must be our hope and the only real solution to the problem - until and unless the Christians stop appeasing them through their anti-Christian ecumenism and debauchery, demonstrating in their own lives what it is to be a real Christian.

Of course, the Muslims' feeling of moral superiority to the Christians is hypocritical. In Britain and Sweden Muslims have been responsible for a sickening series of mass rapes. And a recent survey by the American Center for Justice showed that ISIS rates for the buying of female sex slaves are highest for the age 1-9 category, showing that they imitate their false prophet not only in their violence, but also in their sexual depravity and paedophilia...

But the hypocrisy of our enemies should not be a reason for not cleaning up our own act, and showing the sincerity of our faith in our deeds. St. Cosmas of Aitolia prophesied that after "the general war" the "Hagarenes" - that is, the Muslims - would "learn the mysteries three times faster than the Christians". Presumably, by that time the horrors of the Third World War will have taught the Christians to give a better example to the Muslims...

9/11 took place on the feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in the Orthodox Church. Through it St. John, the prophet of repentance, called the western peoples to repentance. The message remains the same; only its urgency has intensified...

*August 29 / September 11, 2015.
Beheading of St. John the Baptist.*

17. THE FATHER ALMIGHTY

“I believe in One God, the Father Almighty...” Very familiar words, and supposedly we all agree with them. But do we in fact? It is striking how many Orthodox Christians believe and think and act as if God were actually quite weak...

This is most obvious in our prayer life. “If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed...” (Matthew 17.20) But too often our faith is smaller than that. We don’t really believe that God can move mountains. So we don’t ask Him to do so. And so the mountains don’t get moved. “But what would be the point of asking Him to move mountains? This cannot be in accordance with His will...” Agreed: there seem to be very few situations in which it would make sense to ask God for such a thing – although we do read in the life of St. Gregory the Wonderworker that he literally, and not metaphorically, moved a mountain through his prayer. However, the point is not about mountains. The point is about *boldness* in prayer. Our prayer lacks boldness. And at the root of the problem there seems to lie a lack of faith in the omnipotence of God.

Let us consider one very concrete wish-prayer of the holy Prophet-King David: “O that sinners would cease from the earth, and they that work iniquity, that they should be no more!” (Psalms 103.37). Can we not, should we not, pray some such prayer in our own time, when sinners have multiplied to such an extent that the true faith has almost been eliminated from the earth? Can we not, should we not, pray that if the sinners cannot repent and be saved, they should cease from the earth so as to make it possible for new generations of Christians to arise and flourish? At the moment, the faith is suffocated by evil rulers both secular and religious in both East and West – KGB agents and Masons and presidents and mullahs and false popes and patriarchs. Like a huge mountain they stand in the way of the building of the True Church of Christ on earth. But cannot it be said to us as it was to the builder of the Second Temple: “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain!” (Zechariah 4.6-7). The mountain of evil was made as a plain when Zerubbabel’s predecessor King Hezekiah prayed, and 185,000 warriors of the Assyrian Sennacherib were killed by the Archangel Michael in one night (Isaiah 37.36). Again, Saints Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian prayed for the removal of Emperor Julian the Apostate, and he was duly removed, pierced through by the sword of St. Mercurius the Great Martyr in the Mesopotamian desert. The history of the Church provides many more examples of great kings and hierarchs praying the prayer of faith and “turning to flight the armies of the aliens” (Hebrews 11.34). And yet contemporary Orthodoxy seems paralyzed, as if bound, unable to pray for the removal of the great mountain of contemporary evil. Can it be that we do not really believe that God can remove tyrants and heresiarchs with the greatest of ease – if we only ask with faith?

There is no doubt that our practical faith has been undermined by deficiencies in our dogmatic faith. In particular, the godless teaching of Darwinism continues to hold sway over the hearts and minds of very many Orthodox Christians; and even today, over 150 years since the publication of *The Origin of Species*, no Orthodox Synod (as opposed to individual saints, such as Nectarios of Aegina and Nektary of Optina and Seraphim of Platina) has, to the present writer's knowledge, condemned or anathematized it. Darwinist heresiarchs such as Fr. John Romanides are allowed to spew out their soul-destroying writings even in True Orthodox Churches.

Darwinism was invented as an alternative to, and refutation of, the Christian belief in "the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth". "Theological evolutionists" like Romanides think that they can combine false science with false theology by pretending that God somehow took part in and guided the process of evolution. This is not the place for a detailed refutation of Darwinism or theological evolutionism. Suffice it to say that the theological evolutionists present a pathetic picture of a far from Almighty God, fumbling His way through billions of years of experiments involving the senseless and cruel deaths of millions of animals and ape-men, until finally, through a process of trial and error, He reached homo sapiens. As if God could not create the species perfect in a moment of time, without any trials and certainly without any errors!

So what does it mean to say that God is "the Father Almighty"? It means that He created all things out of nothing and in an instant, perfect, in no need of any kind of improvement. It means that after we, by our sins, destroyed that original perfection, He created the laws of the present, fallen world in which we live, and that every single consequence of the working of those laws is known by Him in advance and willed by Him in accordance with His inscrutable Providence. But it also means that He can change those laws at any time, not only temporarily, to create what we call a miracle, but also, if He wills it, permanently, as He will do at the end of the world when He redeems fallen nature and restores it to its paradisaical state. And it means that whatever godly request we, His sons and daughters, ask of Him in faith, He will fulfill it out of His boundless paternal love for us; for "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19.26).

*September 6/19, 2015.
Miracle of the Holy Archangel Michael at Chonae.*

18. A DIALOGUE ON DARWINISM

Between a True Believer and an "Orthodox" Darwinist

Orthodox Darwinist (OD). My friend, do you mind if I ask you a direct question?

True Believer (TB): Go ahead.

OD. Why do you not believe in science?

TB. What makes you think that? Don't you know that I have two scientific degrees, and have published scientific papers in recognized peer-reviewed journals?

OD. I know, but you don't believe in Darwinism...

TB. And so? Does one have to believe in Darwinism in order to believe in science?

OD. Yes, because it is accepted by the establishment in all scientific disciplines.

TB. Since when does conformity with the establishment constitute the criterion of truth and science?

OD. The great majority believes in Darwinism.

TB. Perhaps not as big a majority as you think. In the United States alone there are thousands of Ph.D. scientists who have openly confessed to not believing in Darwinism. And I believe there are thousands more who do not believe in it but who do not say so for fear of losing their jobs. In any case, where would science be if we all followed the majority? Are not the great discoveries made precisely by those who are prepared to think "outside the box"? Was Einstein in the majority when he proposed his theory of relativity?

OD. No, but when he provided experimental proof for his theory, everybody followed him.

TB. Well, we're still waiting for the experimental proof of Darwinism. And one has to say: it's been a very long time coming... Oh, and by the way, Einstein remained in a minority to the end of his life.

OD. How so?

TB. He never accepted Niels Bohr's interpretation of quantum mechanics, which the majority of physicists now accept. So if Einstein can remain in a minority on fundamental issues of physics, and yet remain honoured as one of the great geniuses of science, why should the large and increasing minority of scientists from various disciplines who reject Darwinism not be accorded the title of "scientists"?

OD. Are you talking about the creationists? But they're just Protestant fundamentalists!

TB. Some of them call themselves creationists, some do not. As for many of them being Protestants, why should that disqualify them from being scientists?

OD. But we are both Orthodox. We must not be influenced by Protestant ways of thinking.

TB. So Protestant scientists are no good, but atheist ones are okay?! But is it really worse to be a Protestant than an atheist?! Was not Darwin himself a Protestant Anglican?

OD. Alright, I take your point. But modern Protestants have fundamentalist ideas about the seven days of creation, etc., that we as Orthodox reject.

TB. Do we? I agree that we as Orthodox should avoid heterodox ways of thinking. But before we can say that such-and-such a teaching is “Protestant” or “fundamentalist”, and not Orthodox, we need first to establish what the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church said about the subject.

OD. The Holy Fathers lived before the theory arose, so they could have no opinion on it.

TB. Not so. Several Holy Fathers who lived after Darwin rejected his theory. I’m thinking of the Optina Elders Ambrose, Barsanuphius and Nektary, and St. Theophan the Recluse. St. Nectarios of Aegina rejected it in especially strong terms, saying that anyone who believed that man came from the apes had lost the Holy Spirit! And he described the Darwinists in the words of the Psalm: “Man, being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them” (48.12).

OD. Perhaps these Fathers should have restricted themselves to theology and kept away from science.

TB. But that’s the question: is it really science? Or, as Fr. Seraphim Rose said, is it not in fact philosophy – atheist philosophy – clothed in the garments of science?

OD. How can anyone deny that it is science?!

TB. If it is not based on empirical facts, and is in fact contradicted by many empirical facts, and worse still if it is not even in principle verifiable (as are all theories about the beginning of the world), then it is false science. After all, it only takes one stubborn, unassailable fact to disprove a scientific hypothesis, but evolution is contradicted by a whole mountain of facts in many disciplines.

OD. Can you tell me some of those facts?

TB. I obviously can’t give you an adequate answer here and now. What I can say very briefly, however, is, first, that Darwinism contradicts the best-tested law in the whole of science, the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Secondly, nobody has ever empirically confirmed the central tenet of the theory – that a new species can give birth to another. Even attempts to create new species in the laboratory – the famous fruit-fly experiments – have failed miserably. And thirdly, the main engine of evolution, mutation, has never been shown to produce anything positive, let alone that fantastic miracle, the human genome. And there are many other more specific problems which I will not go into here: the famous “missing links”, for example, the impossibility of explaining sexuality through evolution, etc.

OD. How do you explain its popularity then? Are all these scientists stupid?

TB. Certainly not. Just as the greatest heretics of old, such as Arius and Origen, were very intelligent men, so many – most – evolutionists are very intelligent. But intelligence is not the same as wisdom. And no man is as clever as the devil, who weaves his web and leads into error even the most intelligent of men. But the appeal of Darwinism is in the last analysis not scientific. Its appeal lies in the fact that it provides a *justification for atheism*, for not believing that God created the heavens and the earth. So the reason for the popularity of evolution is not the stupidity of scientists, but their desire to find an intellectual justification of their atheism.

OD. Nevertheless, the questions surrounding evolution are still scientific questions. Even the creationists say they are doing science, not philosophy. As

such, these questions are not theological, and the Holy Fathers should have nothing to say about them.

TB. I disagree. Are not the Holy Fathers glorified by us precisely for their spiritual gifts, such as those of knowing the will of God, of wisdom and of prophecy?

OD. Prophecy looks to the future, not the past.

TB. If prophets know the future through the Spirit of God that is in them, why should they not be able to know the past? Are not the first chapters of Genesis precisely God's revelation of the past, of the creation of the world, to the Prophet and God-Seer Moses? And did not Christ Himself, the Wisdom and the Power of God, not confirm his account, and also the existence of Adam and Eve, of Paradise and the Fall, and of Noah's Flood? Whether you call this subject-matter scientific or not, it concerns facts – historical facts. And I see no reason why the Holy Fathers should not have been enlightened about them.

OD. But you must not understand Genesis literally, as the Protestant fundamentalists understand it! I warned you about that! So much of the text is myth and allegory!

TB. St. Basil the Great, the most famous interpreter of Genesis, whom nobody can accuse of being a Protestant fundamentalist, had this to say about allegorical interpretations of Genesis: "I know the laws of allegory, though less by myself than from the works of others. There are those truly, who do not admit the common sense of the Scriptures, for whom water is not water, but some other nature, who see in a plant, in a fish, what their fancy wishes, who change the nature of reptiles and of wild beasts to suit their allegories, like the interpreters of dreams who explain visions in sleep to make them serve their own ends. For me grass is grass; plant, fish, wild beast, domestic animal, *I take all in the literal sense*. For I am not ashamed of the gospel..... It is this which those seem to me not to have understood, who, giving themselves up to the distorted meaning of allegory, have undertaken to give a majesty of their own invention to Scripture. It is to believe themselves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and to bring forth their own ideas under a pretext of exegesis. *Let us hear Scripture as it has been written.*" (*Hexaemeron*, Homily 9).

OD. Great man though he was, St. Basil could not benefit from the researches of modern scholars, who have shown that Genesis 1 derives from ancient Babylonian myths.

TB. So why should we pay any attention to it at all, if it's just a pretty legend derived from pagan sources? Not that I attach much importance to the findings of "modern scholars". Again and again, they have been shown to be wrong by new findings of even more modern scholars. And yet every new generation of "modern scholars" sees itself as infallible...

OD. Orthodoxy does not despise the findings of scholarship.

TB. So long as they do not contradict the Law of God. But they so often do! And when they do we have to be very clear about what is our ultimate authority: "modern scholars", or Christ, "In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2.3). What we must always be careful not to do is to attach greater authority to the so-called discoveries of "modern scholars" than to the words of the Holy Fathers, of the Apostles, and of Christ Himself...

OD. No, no, you misunderstand me! I have great respect for the writings of the Holy Fathers. I just think that if they had known more they would have modified their theories to take account of it.

TB. But St. Basil was probably the most intelligent and best-educated man of his time. And yet in his *Hexaemeron* he openly pours scorn on the “modern scholars” of his time, always preferring to them “the plain sense of Holy Scripture”. Thus already in his time there were people who believed, like the Darwinists, that the world was not created by God, but emerged spontaneously, by chance. To these the saint replied, right at the beginning of his work: “I am about to speak of the creation of heaven and earth, which was *not spontaneous, as some have imagined, but drew its origin from God. Deceived by their inherent atheism it appeared to them that nothing governed or ruled the universe, and that was all was given up to chance.* To guard us against this error the writer on the creation, from the very first words, enlightens our understanding with the name of God: ‘In the beginning God created.’”

OD. But why could God not have created the world *through* evolution?

TB. Because creation is a deliberate, purposeful act, whereas evolution is a chance process. And an act cannot be purposeful and by chance at the same time. It is a philosophical error to confound purpose and chance, or in any way to try and mix them. In any case, as St. Basil says in another place, there is no such thing as chance. The laws of nature are created by God, Who willed all their consequences to the smallest detail. Only the free will of men and angels are to some extent independent of His will.

OD. Perhaps God guided the process from within...

TB. You mean He filled in all the missing links, all the bits that the scientists can't explain?

OD. Er... yes...

TB. But then He would have had to do all the work! Because there is in fact *nothing* that evolution explains! Even the emergence of the simplest living cell is inexplicable by chance mechanisms such as mutation and natural selection.

OD. But God cooperates with human actions. Why not with material processes?

TB. Because human actions are free – and as such, of course, completely inexplicable by evolution. Or to put it the other way round: if evolution is true, then freewill does not exist. Nobody has explained, or ever could explain, how you get from chance processes to purposeful, willed acts. This freedom is part of the image of God in man, and it was imparted directly by God to man when He created Him, saying: “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness” (Genesis 1.26, 27).

OD. But chimpanzees look so like men!

TB. I grant you that Charles Darwin looked very ape-like. But there is a huge gulf between even Darwin and the most intelligent ape.

OD. I think it can be hardly coincidental that the higher mammals share so much DNA.

TB. I agree. And there is no coincidence, for, as I said before, there is no such thing as chance. The higher mammals share so much DNA because they were created by God as a single family of species. The likenesses were created deliberately by their common Creator. And why should apes and men not

have, for example, very similar hands if they use them for similar purposes? Just as car-makers make, for example, the steering wheels of different kinds of cars of almost identical materials and shape, so God makes the hands of apes and men out of similar spare parts, as it were. But again, just as two cars with identical steering wheels can have very different performances because of subtle but vital differences in other departments, so God has made apes and men similar in their hands but very different in their mental and spiritual capacity.

OD. When I said it can hardly be coincidental, I meant that the increasing commonality of DNA as we go up the chain of being must indicate a single causal process propelling the evolution of one species into another. And I am not excluding God from this process. First the lower animals emerged. Then the apes. Finally, something more perfect came into being in the shape of man. And all with the cooperation and help of God.

TB. You mean He couldn't get it right the first time, but by an enormously long and costly process of trial and error involving the cruel and painful deaths of billions of creatures He finally got the man He wanted?... Is this not close to blasphemy against the omnipotence of God, for Whom all things are possible? Why could not God have created man perfect from the beginning as the Scripture says?

OD. (*irritated*). No, that's not what I mean! And of course He could have created man perfect from the beginning! But the scientific record shows He didn't. You're not suggesting that man is perfect, are you?

TB. He was in the beginning... But then came the Fall... Don't you believe in Adam?

OD. Er...

TB. The Lord Jesus Christ did.

OD. (*hesitantly*) Right... So do I.

TB. Good. I thought for a moment you might believe in an allegorical interpretation of Adam and the Fall, as if "Adam" stood for the whole human race, and the Fall was a mythical attempt to account for its imperfections. But the whole of Christianity rests on the historicity of Adam and the Fall.

OD. How so?

TB. Well, let's take Christ's genealogy in Luke 3. It traces the origin of His human nature through 42 generations of individual men, ending with Adam. It makes no sense to say that the middle and later generations (let's say, from Abraham onwards) were truly His ancestors, while Adam and the early patriarchs were mythical.

OD. But I'm not saying they were mythical. I just don't see why Adam could not have been the product of evolution.

TB. So how did Adam evolve from the apes? And how is that compatible with the account of His creation from the earth and the breath of God in Genesis 2?

OD. Well, perhaps "earth" stands for the embryo of an ape-man, and God's "breath" stands for His creative transformation of the embryo into a human being.

TB. An interesting idea... Of course, there is no Darwinist scientist who would suggest anything of the kind... So you seem to me to be in danger of finding

yourself in agreement neither with the Holy Fathers nor with the Darwinist scientists.

OD. Archimandrite A. put this idea forward to me in a letter.

TB. And is Archimandrite A. a Holy Father?

OD. That was a nasty jibe! Don't you know that Archimandrite A. is a disciple of the famous theologian Fr. John Romanides, who was a Darwinist?

TB. You mean the divorced new-calendarist ecumenist whose heretical ideas on a whole series of subjects has now infected most of World Orthodoxy?

OD. You have no respect!

TB. No, none at all for those who corrupt the teaching of the Holy Fathers...

But let's explore your idea for a moment. So Adam, according to you and Archimandrite A., is derived from the embryo of an ape-man. Why, then, do we read in Luke 3.38 that Adam was "the son of God" and not the son of an ape?

OD. Well, perhaps he was the son of God in his soul, but the son of an ape in the body.

TB. Aha! Did you know that this was the teaching of Pope John-Paul II?

OD. (*hesitantly*) No...

TB. Well, let's leave aside the soul for a moment and concentrate on the body of Adam. What you're saying, as I understand you, is that Adam's body derived from the embryo of an ape-man. So he had an ape-man father and an ape-man mother? Or were they Neanderthals?

OD. (*hesitantly*) Er... yes. Or whatever creature the scientists now consider to be the immediate ancestor of Homo Sapiens...

TB. Yes, it is a problem, isn't it! The scientists are always changing their mind about so many things! But let me ask you another question. Assuming that the scientists don't change their minds yet again, can we also assume that Eve, too, was created from a Neanderthal embryo?

OD. (*hesitantly*) Er... yes.

TB. So Mr. and Mrs. Neanderthal got together and miraculously created the embryo of Adam. At the same time, another Mr. and Mrs. Neanderthal got together and no less miraculously created the embryo of Eve. And then Adam and Eve got together and created Cain and Abel...

OD. Something like that...

TB. But Holy Scripture says that Eve was created from the side of Adam...

OD. I don't think we have to take that literally.

TB. So how, in your opinion, should that Scripture be interpreted?

OD. To be honest, I haven't thought about this much.

TB. I congratulate you on your honesty! Most "theological evolutionists" like yourself have also not thought these problems through... One thing is clear, however: if we are not to treat the Genesis account, not merely as an allegory, but as a complete fairy-tale, like something out of Hans Christian Andersen or Harry Potter, then we must accept that Eve was not made in the normal way, through sexual intercourse between two human beings or ape-men.

OD. I can't accept that.

TB. What can't you accept? That Eve was made from Adam?

OD. Yes.

TB. Do you accept the Virgin Birth of Christ from Mary the Mother of God?

OD. (*indignantly*) Yes of course.

TB. Then why not the virgin birth of Eve from Adam? After all, it has to be considered a far lesser miracle, since it did not involve the incarnation of God... Remember that the two events were seen as exactly parallel to each other by St. Paul and the Holy Fathers. Just as Adam was created out of virgin soil, and then Eve out of his side, so the new Adam, Jesus, was born out of the virgin soil of the new Eve, Mary, and then gave birth to the children of the Church through the blood and water that flowed from His side on the Cross. In this way the new Adam “recreated” the human race that came from the old Adam by a closely similar process of parthenogenesis. However, if Adam and Eve were not real persons, or symbols, or the descendants of Neanderthals or what not, the whole pattern breaks down, to the detriment of the understanding of the whole doctrine of the Incarnation.

OD. Alright, I see the logic of your exposition. But you don’t seriously believe the whole story of Eve and the apple and the serpent, do you? That’s obviously symbolic, isn’t it?

TB. A mere symbol cannot explain the origin of sin and death.

OD. Why is any explanation necessary? Are they not just facts of life?

TB. You mean facts of death! But death requires an explanation.

OD. Why?

TB. Because, as we read in The Wisdom of Solomon, God is the author of life, and did not create death. For what part can death have in God, Who is Life Himself? “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1.4). He is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14.6)

OD. Death is not a problem for evolutionists. All living things die, and that’s all there is to it.

TB. I agree that death is not a problem for evolutionists, because their whole system is based on the primacy of death, just as Christianity is based on the primacy of life, that is, God. These facts are axiomatic for the two systems; just as they can’t explain death, and shy away from any attempt to do so, so we can’t explain God and condemn as blasphemy any attempt to do so. Evolutionists believe that all things came from a tiny quantity of super-heated dust, which then inexplicably gave birth to living organisms, which then even more inexplicably gave birth to more and more complex and “lively” organisms. “Inexplicably”, because these higher forms of life came about through two bearers of death – mutation and natural selection.

OD. Yes, it is a bit strange that destruction – for mutation and natural selection are essentially destructive forces – should be the engine of creation...

TB. Strange indeed! And which explanation sounds intuitively more plausible: that life should come out of death, which is itself a nothingness, negation, sheer emptiness, or that death should come from saying “no” to life – that is, to the unimaginable fullness of God and His commandments? In Romans 5.12 St. Paul writes that death entered into the world as a result of the moral fall of one particular man, Adam, when he said no to God and the single commandment that God had given him. Sin and death then entered into all his descendants through heredity. This is the doctrine of original sin. But then the new Adam, Jesus Christ, Life incarnate, reversed the fall of Adam, said “no” to the devil, the true author of death, and all his works, and offered the perfect sacrifice for

sin on the Cross. He then communicated this new life, lived by Him in His human soul and body received from the Virgin, to all those who believe in Him and receive Holy Baptism, wiping out sin and death in the process. "So that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5.21).

OD. That makes sense... But I still have some nagging doubts... What about the age of the earth? And is not humanity many hundreds of thousands of years old, much longer than the few thousand from Adam if we accept the genealogies?

TB. We must not doubt the Holy Scriptures, even when "science falsely so-called" teaches something different. Do you believe in Noah's flood?

OD. (*hesitantly*) I'm not sure.

TB. The Lord did (Matthew 24.36-39). So did St. Peter (II Peter 3.5-6).

OD. Well then I believe in it.

TB. Good! Well, if there was a universal flood in the time of Noah, we can safely assume that the dates given for the age of the earth and the age of mankind in accordance with most dating methods based on chemistry are wildly wrong, since they assume that there has been no such flood. For if there was a universal flood, the chemical composition of the earth must have been radically changed by it, upsetting all calculations. However, there is one dating method that does not assume that there was no flood: the magnetic field of the earth, which is not effected by such events as floods. Now a physicist from Texas has calculated that if the magnetic field has been decreasing at a constant rate over time, which seems extremely likely, then human beings would not have been able to live on the earth more than ten thousand years ago, because the magnetic field would have been too intense. This brings the age of the earth much closer to what we would calculate on the basis of the genealogies.

OD. What about the fossils?

TB. The best explanation of the fossils is an old one, but one confirmed by a modern saint: Elder Nektary of Optina. He pointed out that many fossils are to be found on the tops of mountains. How did they get there if they were not deposited there by flood water?

OD. So the fossils are not millions of years old...

TB. No, only a few thousand. They are the remains of the victims of the flood. Incidentally, anthropologists have discovered that just about every tribe and people they have studied has stories about a universal flood and a Noah-like figure in their folk memories... Intriguing...

OD. So would that explain the extinction of the dinosaurs?

TB. Perhaps... It certainly explains the sudden deaths of many thousand of woolly mammoths in Siberia, who have been found frozen in the permafrost with undigested grass in their mouths. Evidently they were killed by flood waters while they were still eating. Then the waters froze when the climate suddenly changed after the cloud cover surrounding the earth was removed... And there are many, many other facts discovered by scientists that are much more easily explained if we reject evolution and accept an account of the history of the earth that includes the flood.

OD. So we can put our trust in science after all?

TB. No. All science is fallible. The only infallible source of knowledge is the Word of God. However, if we are presented with two scientific systems, one of which is evolution with all its holes, missing links and vast theoretical problems, on the one hand, and on the other a system that overcomes the problems presented by evolution while being in accord with the Word of God and the Tradition of the Church - is it not more rational, and certainly more Christian, to prefer the latter?

OD. You have a point. More than a point. You have the truth!

TB. Glory to God for enlightening us with the truth! Indeed, it is only in this truth that we can glorify Him in a fitting manner... "How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all, the earth is filled with Thy creation" (Psalm 103.26).

September 29 / October 12, 2015.

19. ORTHODOXY AND THE THEORY OF THE JUST WAR

Introduction

For most of Christian history, the theory of the just war has been a subject, not so much of Orthodox, as of Roman Catholic theology. Only in the late nineteenth century, with the appearance of Tolstoy's theory of non-resistance to evil, the outbreak of World War One and Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky)'s *The Christian Faith and War* (1915), did the question of the morality of war become a subject of theological debate in Orthodox circles. Even now, after two World Wars and the many other wars in which Orthodox Christians have participated in the past century, there has been little systematic discussion of the subject from an Orthodox point of view.

The reason for this may be that until the Russian revolution most Orthodox Christians had neither the knowledge nor the need to judge the morality or otherwise of the wars they took part in. Following the words of St. John the Baptist, they saw nothing dishonourable in the soldier's life, even in service to a pagan ruler (Luke 3.14); and since, as St. Paul pointed out, "there is no authority that is not from God" (Romans 13.1), the idea of refusing service to the authorities on moral grounds simply did not arise. When Europe's leaders became Christian, the duty of military service was still more strongly felt; and since, after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, Christians were not forced to serve in the Ottoman armies, the potential moral dilemma involved in fighting for infidels against Christians was avoided. There were exceptions to this rule, as when, for example, Serbian princes after the battle of Kosovo were forced to fight in Turkish armies as vassals of the Sultan, or when Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek rulers in the Balkans waged war against each other. But before the twentieth century we do not hear the argument: "This war is unjust, therefore I will not fight in it." Of course, *rulers* may have suffered torments of conscience in deciding whether to go to war in a particular case or not. But this was not a problem for their *subjects*: their duty was simply to obey, to give to Caesar what was Caesar's...

Today, however, politics has become all the rage, and almost everyone takes it upon himself to judge political leaders. As Paul Johnson rightly says, "Perhaps the most significant characteristic of the dawning modern world [which he dated to 1815-30] was the tendency to relate everything to politics."²⁶³ This tendency has now penetrated deeply into the Orthodox Church, where Obama and Putin are discussed with more passion than the properly theological issues of Ecumenism and Sergianism. And yet both these issues are related to politics, so we cannot avoid politics altogether. What we can avoid, however, is speaking about it *in a political way*. Instead, we must develop a *theology* of politics. And among the most important questions that such a theology of politics must address is: what is a just war?

²⁶³ Johnson, *The Birth of the Modern, World Society 1815-1830*, London: Phoenix, 1992, p. 662.

Old Testament Morality?

A preliminary objection that needs to be dealt with first is: should not war and politics be judged by the more savage standards of the Old Testament rather than the mercifulness of the New? Would that not be more realistic, more in accordance with realpolitik? Thus pondering the morality of the Allies' call in World War Two for "unconditional surrender", we could refer to some Old Testament precedents. After all, did not the Lord order Joshua to enter the land of Canaan, destroy all the tribes they found therein, and occupy the land themselves? And did He not order Saul to destroy all the Amalekites, removing him from the kingship when he disobeyed?

The major problem with this approach is that the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount clearly and specifically *replaced* the cruder morals of the Old Testament with His own higher laws. Thus "an eye for an eye" was replaced by love for enemies; easy divorce and multiple marriages by monogamy and chastity. Nor did the Lord or the Apostles make an exception for rulers – although, of course, in their time there were as yet no *Christian* rulers. To say that as individuals we are subject to the New Testament Law, but that in collectives we can revert to a lightly tempered savagery is to introduce a kind of schizophrenia into the Christian Gospel, a double standard which appears to limit the power of Grace. And its weakness is demonstrated by the fact that Christian rulers, even heterodox ones, have rarely resorted to it, but have almost always tried to justify their actions, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, on the basis of Christian principles. Nor, as far as we know, has any truly Christian ruler attempted to exterminate a whole people on the basis of a supposed revelation from the Lord. Moreover, in those cases in which Orthodox rulers have acted cruelly in the name of Christianity – we think of Emperor Theodosius' slaughter of three thousand Thessalonians in the fourth century, or Charlemagne's extermination of the pagan Saxons in the eighth century, or Ivan the Terrible's slaughter of the Novgorodians in the sixteenth, – they have not received the approbation of Christian society.

In the Old Testament the Lord may have commanded merciless slaughter in some cases in order to test the obedience of a certain leader of the people – Abraham in the case of Isaac, Saul in the case of the Amalekites. Or, as in the case of Joshua and the Canaanites, it may have been a concession to barbarian mores, "because of the hardness of your hearts" (Matthew 19.8), or because the Old Testament Promised Land is a symbol or figure of the complete purity of the New Testament Kingdom of God. For "there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of life" (Revelation 21.27).

It should also be remembered that even in the Old Testament there are commandments which are completely in the spirit of the New Testament. Thus in Leviticus we find an injunction that modern Orthodox nationalists would do well to take heed of: "If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born

among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." (19.33-34) Again, the king of Israel once asked the Prophet Elisha what he should do with some captured Syrians: "My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?" But he answered: "You shall not kill them. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." As a result of the king's obedience to the prophet, "bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel..." (II Kings 6:21-23)

However, it must be admitted that no society could exist for long if all crimes were simply forgiven. Punishment has to be part and parcel of any legal system, and has certainly been part of every historical Christian legal system. For while an individual Christian may forgive his enemies and persecutors, society as a whole cannot do that: it has to protect the innocent and deter future crime. And so when St. Vladimir, Great-Prince of Kiev, became a Christian and wanted to abolish the death penalty in his kingdom, his bishops dissuaded him, pointing to the general increase of crime that resulted. In his personal life he could turn the other cheek, but as a prince he could not...

Christian history is full of examples of Christian rulers transcending the letter of the law by forgiving their enemies and doing good to those who hate them in their personal life. But in public life they had to uphold the law, and even carry out executions and wage wars. For even in the New Testament it is written that the ruler is "the minister of God", who "does not bear the sword in vain, [but is] an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (Romans 13.4).

[The First Five Centuries](#)

The attitude of the Early Church to politics was moulded by two evangelical principles: that the political authorities of their time were established by God, and that the things of Caesar should be left to Caesar. Taken together, these principles precluded even the thought of revolution, whatever the moral defects of the Roman emperor. Following the command of their Lord, Christians kept their swords firmly within their sheaths, knowing that he who lives by the sword will die by the sword. And they unsheathed them only in obedience to the emperor. It was not for the Christians to question Caesar's decisions in Caesar's sphere. He was answerable to God, not to them. Of course, there were limits to the Christians' obedience: they refused, even at the price of martyrdom, to offer incense to false gods, and they refused to put other Christians to the sword. But this had nothing to do with pacifist or anti-war, still less democratic sentiment. They simply did not believe that it was their business to resist or question the State's political decisions, or to overthrow the State through violence. This would not have been a just war from their point of view.

Instead, they resorted to prayer, and patience, and the power of the Cross of Christ. And their patience and faith was rewarded: without the Christians having to shed a drop of Christian or non-Christian blood, the Lord raised up St. Constantine in the far north-west of the empire, and then granted him dominion over the whole of the oikoumene, the ancient Roman empire, throughout which he introduced Christian laws and customs that greatly increased the size and influence of the Church. Of course, Constantine did fight wars. But they were just wars, fulfilling all the criteria of a just war. First, he was himself a legitimate ruler, the heir to the western part of the Roman empire. Secondly, at least from the battle of Milvian Bridge in 312, he fought in the name of Christ, under the banner of the Cross; and all his subsequent works in peacetime showed that his motivation had always been the prosperity of the True Church of Christ. And thirdly, he fought only when he had to, and to the degree that he had to: as when, for example, his co-ruler Licinius broke their common agreement and began persecuting the Christians in defiance of that agreement.

After Constantine, the Christians maintained their principles of obedience combined with non-interference in the purely political sphere. But since the emperors were now baptized, the bishops felt emboldened to rebuke them when they sinned against the faith or moral teaching of the Church. Thus St. Athanasius the Great was very fierce to Constantius when he became an Arian heretic. SS. Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian were even fiercer against Julian the Apostate when he became a pagan. And St. Ambrose of Milan famously excommunicated St. Theodosius the Great when he killed three thousand innocents, and again rebuked him fiercely when he ordered the restoration of a synagogue that had been burned down by Christians.

In the East, war was not glorified, but considered a regrettable necessity in a fallen world. The Orthodox governed themselves in accordance with the spirit of St. Basil's Canon 13: "Our fathers did not consider killing on the field of battle as murder, pardoning, as it seems to me, defenders of chastity and piety. But it might be good that they refrain from Communion only in the Holy Mysteries for three years as people who have unclean hands..." This attitude was prefigured by David's not being allowed to build the Temple because he was a man of war, with blood on his hands. He made the preparations; but it was his son, Solomon, a man of peace, who was entrusted with the building. For, as Patrick Henry Reardon writes, "War, even justified war, even necessary war, yet carries a quality of defilement incompatible with the proper worship of God. Men are to offer their prayers with 'holy hands, without wrath' (I Timothy 2.8). Blood, in the Bible, is a holy thing. To have shed blood in anger – which in warfare takes place in profusion – carries a ritual, if not a moral, defilement that fits ill with the purity of God's worship. This persuasion has always been expressed in the Church's canons on priestly ordination [which forbid the participation of priests in war]."²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ Reardon, *Chronicles of History and Worship: Orthodox Christian Reflections on the Books of Chronicles*, Ben Lomond, Ca.: Conciliar Press, 2006, p. 78.

From the time of St. Augustine, however, we find the beginning of a subtly different approach to politics. War continued to be seen as justified in certain circumstances.²⁶⁵ However, the sack of Rome by the Goths in 406 had a huge impact on Western Christians; and while not renouncing the traditional approach, and the traditional loyalty of Christians to the Roman empire, St. Augustine exhibits a more radical, apolitical and even anti-political view in his famous work *The City of God*. Thus at one point he calls Rome a “second Babylon”.²⁶⁶ For there was always a demonic element at the heart of the Roman state, he says, which has not been eliminated even now. Sin and fratricide – Romulus’ murder of Remus – lie at the very root of the Roman state, just as sin and fratricide – Cain’s murder of Abel – lie at the beginning of the history of humanity. Moreover, the growth of the Roman Empire was achieved through a multitude of wars, many of which were quite unjust. For “without justice what are governments but bands of brigands?”²⁶⁷

Therefore it should not surprise us, says Augustine, that the Roman Empire should decline and fall. “If heaven and earth are to pass away, why is it surprising if at some time the state is going to come to an end? If what God has made will one day vanish, then surely what Romulus made will disappear much sooner.” “As for this mortal life, which ends after a few days’ course, what does it matter under whose rule a man lives, being so soon to die, provided that the rulers do not force him to impious and wicked acts?”²⁶⁸ For it is the Jerusalem above that is our *real* Fatherland, not Rome here below.

Augustine’s views are only the first “take” on a distinctly Western view of politics and war in the Orthodox period (up to the schism of the papacy in 1054). While the Eastern Empire acquired relative stability and therefore a stability of political thinking, the final collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476, and the emergence of Germanic kingdoms that stood in various relations towards Christian Rome, raised hitherto unknown ethical dilemmas for western thought. These revolved around such questions as: What authority is from God? Can an authority be legal if it is not Orthodox or does not recognize the Eastern Emperor? Can the Church intervene to bless a war or curse it, or remove rulers that fail to fight just wars or insist on fighting unjust ones?

So it is perhaps not coincidental that the first sketches of a theory of the just war emerge precisely in this period of western imperial collapse, in the writings of St. Augustine.

²⁶⁵ Cf. St. Augustine in *The City of God*: “They who have waged war in obedience to the divine command, or in conformity with His laws, have represented in their persons the public justice or the wisdom of government, and in this capacity have put to death wicked men; such persons have by no means violated the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.”

²⁶⁶ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XVIII, 2.

²⁶⁷ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, IV, 4.

²⁶⁸ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, V, 17.

“From Augustine’s diffuse comments on war,” writes Christopher Tyerman, “could be identified four essential characteristics of a just war that were to underpin most subsequent discussions of the subject. A just war requires a just cause; its aim must be defensive or for the recovery of rightful possession; legitimate authority must sanction it; those who fight must be motivated by right intent. Thus war, by nature sinful, could be a vehicle for the promotion of righteousness; war that is violent could, as some later medieval apologists maintained, act as a form of charitable love, to help victims of injustice. From Augustine’s categories developed the basis of Christian just war theory, for example, by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century.”²⁶⁹

The Middle Ages

Byzantine political theory did not develop significantly after the reign of Justinian in the sixth century. State and Church were independent of each other, and yet in a “symphonic” relationship with each other. The State occupied itself with political matters, and all decisions regarding peace and war were made by the emperor. The Church was the conscience of the State, and the Patriarch had the right to intercede with the Emperor. But in practice the Church had little direct influence on the decision to go to war; nor did she develop any theory of the just war on the model of Aquinas.

Problems did arise the East with the emergence of new Orthodox kingdoms such as the Bulgarian. The question here was: could there be Orthodox Christian rulers independent of the Emperor of New Rome? And if not, were the Christian Romans justified in going to war to suppress recessionist movements? However, these problems did not lead to a significant development of political theory...

It was different in the West, where the lack of a single political authority, the greater influence of heresies such as Arianism, and the growing political role of the Papacy, created difficult dilemmas that encouraged the growth of political theory. For example, in the late sixth century the Orthodox Prince Hermenegild of Spain rebelled against his Arian father. The question was: was he justified in rebelling against his father on the grounds of religion? On the one hand, he was considered by many to be a martyr because he was killed in prison for refusing to receiving Arian communion. On the other hand, the Visigothic kings that killed him retained the allegiance of their mainly Roman and Orthodox subjects, an attitude that bore spiritual fruit in that, soon after his death, this dynasty became Orthodox, ushering in the most glorious period of Spanish history. So were Arian or pagan kings who nevertheless commanded the allegiance of the majority of the population to be considered legitimate or not? And was the waging of war against them to be encouraged or not?

²⁶⁹ Tyerman, *God’s War: A New History of the Crusades*, London: Penguin, 2006, p. 34.

From the time of Charlemagne the Western Orthodox had to fight wars against Vikings from the north, Saracens from the south and Magyars from the east. These could, of course, be justified as the defense of Christendom against the heathen. But they were sometimes accompanied by excesses – for example, Charlemagne’s forcible baptism of the Saxons in the 780s, or the English King Ethelred’s murder of several hundred of his Danish subjects in 1004. These again elicited the need for moral reflection and evaluation – a need that became urgent soon after the fall of the Western Church in 1054.

In the Orthodox West, consciousness of the evil that lurks even in the justest of wars remained strong up to the schism of 1054, as we see in the Truce of God movement. And even after the schism this consciousness lingered for a time, as when the Norman knights who had participated in the Conquest of England in 1066-70 were put on penance when they returned home. But by the end of the century, this Orthodox consciousness had disappeared completely in the West...

For this was now the era of the schismatic Papacy with its heretical understanding of Church-State relations. The Church became secularized and politicized; the symphony of powers broke down in kingdom after kingdom; and the Papacy took upon itself the right to raise up and cast down kings and emperors. It was now the Pope rather than any king who decided what wars were just, the criterion being, in effect, what was in the interests of the Papacy...

Especially just, in the Papacy’s view, were the crusades, a new kind of war with a more exalted, religious pathos. For the crusader, as Jonathan Riley-Smith writes, “A crusade was a holy war fought against those perceived to be the external or internal foes of Christendom for the recovery of Christian property or in defence of the Church or Christian people. As far as the crusaders were concerned, the Muslims in the East and in Spain had occupied Christian territory, including land sanctified and made his very own by the presence of Christ himself, and they had imposed infidel tyranny on the Christians who lived there. The pagans in the Baltic region threatened new Christian settlements. The [Albigensian] heretics in Languedoc or Bohemia were rebels against their mother the Church and were denying the responsibility for teaching entrusted to her by Christ; they and the Church’s political opponents in Italy disturbed rightful order. These people all menaced Christians and the Church, and their actions provided crusaders with the opportunity of expressing love for their oppressed or threatened brothers in a just cause, which was always related to that of Christendom as a whole. A crusading army was therefore considered to be international even when it was actually composed of men from only one region... The war it fought was believed to be directly authorized by Christ himself, the incarnate God, through his mouthpiece, the pope. Being Christ’s own enterprise it was regarded as positively holy...”²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History*, London: Athlone Press, 1987, pp. xxviii-xxix.

Those who incited the crusades were popes rather than kings (Gregory VII in 1074, Urban II in 1095); plenary remission of sins and penances, even eternal salvation, was touted as the reward – “by a transitory labour you can win an eternal reward”, said Gregory VII. The crusades were holy wars blessed by the Pope and directed against Muslims (in Spain and Palestine), pagans (the Slavic Wends and Balts), and even other Christians (the Anglo-Saxons, the French Albigensians, the Novgorodians).

They were not strictly defensive wars any longer, but wars of *reconquest* of formerly Christian lands. To this was added a passionate and sinful element, the desire for *revenge*, albeit on God’s behalf. Thus the Norman leader Robert Guiscard declared his wish to free Christians from Muslim rule and to “avenge the injury done to God”²⁷¹... The Lord said: “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay”. But for the brave new world of heretical Roman Catholic Christendom, vengeance became once again a human obligation.

The evil consequences were not slow to reveal themselves. Thus the Crusades were wars of sadistic *cruelty*, as when the warriors of the First Crusade in 1099 slaughtered almost the whole of the Jewish and Muslim population of Jerusalem. “In the Temple,” wrote one eye-witness, “[the Crusaders] rode in blood up to their bridles. Indeed it was a just and splendid judgement of God that this place should be filled with the blood of unbelievers.”²⁷²

Nor was this cruelty exceptional. Bernard of Clairvaux said about the crusade of 1147 against the Slavic Wends: “We expressly forbid that for any reason whatsoever they should make a truce with those peoples, whether for money or for tribute, until such time as, with God’s help, either their religion or their nation be destroyed.”²⁷³

For, as Bernard stressed, “the knight of Christ need fear no sin in killing the foe, he is a minister of God for the punishment of the wicked. In the death of a pagan a Christian is glorified, because Christ is glorified... [The knight] who kills for religion commits no evil but rather does good, for his people and himself. If he dies in battle, he gains heaven; if he kills his opponents, he avenges Christ. Either way, God is pleased.”²⁷⁴

This was already a distinctly new, and heterodox understanding of the just war, one that owed more, ironically, to the Islamic concept of *jihad* than to the Gospel... *Jihad* is “the sixth pillar of Islam, the perpetual collective and sometimes individual obligation on all the faithful to struggle (*jihad*) spiritually against unbelief in themselves (*al-jihad al-akbar*, the greater *jihad*) and physically

²⁷¹ Tyerman, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

²⁷² Raymond of Aguilers, the Count of Toulouse’s chaplain, in Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Jerusalem: The Biography*, London: Phoenix, 2012, p. 253.

²⁷³ Bernard, in Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, pp. 487-488.

²⁷⁴ Bernard, *De Laude Novae Militiae Ad Milites Templi*.

against unbelievers (*al-jihad al-asghar*, the lesser *jihad*).²⁷⁵ The earth is divided into the world of Islam, and the world of war; and the normal relationship between the two is war. "Believers," says the Koran, "make war on the infidels who dwell around you. Deal firmly with them." (9.123). "Like Pharaoh's people and those before them, they disbelieved their Lord's revelations. Therefore we will destroy them for their sins..." (8.54).

In the fifteenth century the Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun summed up the difference between the Christian view of war and mission and the Islamic view as follows: "In the Muslim community, jihad is a religious duty because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and the obligation to convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force. The other religious groups do not have a universal mission, and the jihad is not a religious duty for them, save only for purposes of defense. But Islam is under obligation to gain power over other nations."

In the era of the Crusades, we see the lesser *jihad*, the physical struggle against unbelievers, becoming increasingly important in the thought and practice of the Catholic West, which in turn stimulated its revival among the Muslims. Not only war, but also cruelty against the infidels is justified "because of their sins". Traditional peaceful missionary work has no place in this Christian *jihad*...

In the long run, however, the crusaders *failed* in their aim of reconquering the Holy Land from the Muslims: by the late thirteenth century most of the Crusader kingdoms carved out of Syria and Palestine had been reconquered by the Muslims. So if that, too, was the "just and splendid judgement of God", it did not speak well for the justice or holiness of the Crusader wars. Rather, it confirmed the judgement of the great hermit St. Neophytus the Enclosed of Cyprus (+1219), who said of one of the crusading attempts to reconquer Jerusalem: "*It is similar to the wolves coming to chase away the dogs...*"²⁷⁶

The original aim of the crusades was to help "liberate" the Eastern Churches. But they ended up by *destroying Orthodoxy* in large parts of the Balkans and Middle East, especially during the Fourth Crusade of 1204, which sacked Constantinople and turned it into a Latin city. Already before the Second Crusade Bernard of Clairvaux had expressed "bloodthirsty anti-Greek fulminations".²⁷⁷ By 1204 "fulminations" had turned into actions - murder, theft and rape on a grand scale; and a project that had begun as a mission to liberate the Eastern Churches at the request of the Byzantine emperor ended up by destroying the Byzantine State (temporarily) and attempting to subject all the Orthodox Churches to Rome. Even Pope Innocent III disapproved. The

²⁷⁵ Tyerman, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

²⁷⁶ Fr. Panagiotes Carras, "Saint Neophytos of Cyprus and the Crusades", <http://orthodoxyinfo.org/Saints/StNeophytos.htm>.

²⁷⁷ Sir Steven Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, Oxford, 1955, p. 100.

Greek Church, he said, “now, and with reason, detests the Latins more than dogs”.²⁷⁸

The Crusades demonstrate how easily apparently good intentions – for what could be a better intention than the liberation of Christians living under the yoke of unbelievers in the land of Christ’s Birth? – can pave the way to hell.

The problem is that violence, even violence that is blessed by lawful authorities, can so easily unleash hatred and cruelty. And this in turn leads to false, heretical justifications of that hatred and cruelty; for “the sinner praiseth himself in the lusts of his soul, and the unrighteous man likewise blesseth himself therein” (Psalm 19.24). Evil passion is clothed in the vestments of righteousness; the regrettable and always tainted necessity of war is made into something far from regrettable, even holy. Defense turns into aggression; defense of the true faith – into the imposition of heresy (for Catholicism, of course, is a heresy); Christian morality – into pagan (or Muslim) immorality.

So can we find examples of truly holy wars in this period? We can indeed – but only in the Orthodox East. Paradoxically, some of these were precisely defensive wars *against* the Crusaders, as when St. Alexander Nevsky defeated the Teutonic Knights at the battle on the ice in present-day Estonia in 1242. But St. Alexander always governed his actions by the famous motto: “God is to be found, not in violence, but in righteousness”. Moreover, he did not believe that the mere fact that a Christian land had been conquered by unbelievers meant that he was *obliged* to make war against them. Thus while he fought the Roman Catholics, he voluntarily submitted to the Mongols, and paid them tribute, choosing the lesser of two evils. In other words, he rejected the Muslim principle of perpetual war (declared or undeclared) against unbelievers and heretics, but accepted the Christian principle that sometimes God takes away lands from the Christians, and that it is not His will that they be returned to them – at any rate for the time being, until they have repented of their sins...

140 years later, however, the situation changed... In 1380, the Tatar Mamai invaded Muscovy. But St. Sergius of Radonezh blessed the Great-Prince Demetrius of Moscow to fight only when all other measures had failed: “You, my lord prince, must care and strongly stand for your subjects, and lay down your life for them, and shed your blood in the image of Christ Himself, Who shed His blood for us. But first, O lord, go to them with righteousness and obedience, as you are bound to submit to the khan of the Horde in accordance with your position. You know, Basil the Great tried to assuage the impious Julian with gifts, and the Lord looked on Basil’s humility and overthrew the impious Julian. And the Scripture teaches us that such enemies want glory and honour from us, we give it to them; and if they want silver and gold, we give it to them; but for the name of Christ, the Orthodox faith, we must lay down our lives and shed our blood. And you, lord, give them honour, and gold, and

²⁷⁸ Tyerman, op. cit., p. 538.

sliver, and God will not allow them to overcome us: seeing your humility, He will exalt you and thrust down their unending pride.”

“I have already done that,” replied the Great Prince: “but my enemy is exalted still more.”

“If so,” said the God-pleaser, “then final destruction awaits him, while you, Great Prince, can expect help, mercy and glory from the Lord. Let us hope on the Lord and the Most Pure Mother of God, that They will not abandon you”. And he added: “You will conquer your enemies.”²⁷⁹ Fortified by this blessing, Great-Prince Demetrius defeated the enemy at the great battle of Kulikovo Polje, at which over 100,000 Russian warriors gave their lives for the Orthodox faith and their Russian homeland.

It is important to emphasize that St. Sergius did not actively bless a policy of rebellion against those whom previous princes and metropolitans had seen as their lawful sovereigns. Rather, as we have seen, he advised submission in the first place, and war only if the Tatar could not be bought off. In any case, Mamai was a rebel against the Horde, so in resisting him the Russians were not rebelling against their lawful sovereign. And as if to emphasize that the legitimate Mongol Khan still had his rights, two years later he came and sacked Moscow. So there was not, and could not be, any radical change in policy from the time of Alexander Nevsky... It was not until a century later, in 1480, when God had changed the balance of power in their favour without war, that the Muscovites were able to refuse to pay tribute to the khans...

In 1389, St. Lazar of Serbia fell against the Turks in the battle of Kosovo. Kosovo Polje was a defensive battle in defense of the True Faith and blessed and led by legitimate authorities. It therefore fulfilled the criteria for a just war. But it contained an important extra lesson. According to tradition, on the eve of the battle King Lazar had a vision in which he was offered a choice between an earthly victory and an earthly kingdom, or an earthly defeat that would win him and his soldiers the Heavenly Kingdom. He chose the latter and lost both the battle and his own life – but his incorrupt relics continue to work miracles to this day²⁸⁰, proving that he did indeed inherit the Heavenly Kingdom...

The significance of this event is critical to an understanding of the just war from an Orthodox point of view; for the ultimate aim of such a war must not be earthly territory, earthly victories or earthly gains in general. The aim must be *heavenly*, the salvation of souls. And sometimes from the point of view of the Heavenly Kingdom, the earthly kingdom may have to be sacrificed...

[The Rise of Nationalism](#)

²⁷⁹ Archimandrite Nikon, *Zhitie i Pobedy Prepodobnago i Bogonosnago Otsa Nashego Sergia, Igumena Radonezhskago* (The Life and Victories of our Holy and God-bearing Father Sergius, Abbot of Radonezh), Sergiev Posad, 1898, p. 149.

²⁸⁰ Tim Judah, *The Serbs*, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 39.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, all the Balkan Orthodox peoples came under the Turkish Ottoman yoke. Amidst all the undoubted hardship and suffering this caused, it also brought some definite advantages. One was the restriction of Catholic, and later, Protestant missionary work among the Orthodox. The other was the suppression of the inter-Orthodox nationalism that had arisen in the centuries before the fall, and which had led to that unheard-of phenomenon: wars of Orthodox against Orthodox. Now the Orthodox, instead of fighting each other, could only sympathize with each other in their common oppression by the Turkish sultan.

And yet the nationalist virus was not destroyed, only suppressed... The French revolution of 1789 with its glorification of freedom and deification of the nation found a ready response in the hearts of many Orthodox under the Turkish yoke. They longed for the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire and the return of a Christian power - which was a natural longing, but not necessarily in accordance with the will of God, Who orders all things for our spiritual benefit.

Moreover, all the Balkan Orthodox were now under the secular as well as the spiritual authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch, who had sworn an oath of allegiance to the Sultan. There could therefore be no justification for rebellion against the Sultan. Not only was he a true political authority from God recognized as such by the highest spiritual authority: to rebel against him was also to rebel against the Church.

So when the Greeks of the Peloponnese rose up against the Turks in 1821, the result was bound to be tragic. Both the Patriarch and the Tsar refused to support the rebellion; and the Patriarch was hanged by the Turks. Pogroms took place on both sides: in the Peloponnese, the entire Turkish population (of over 47,000) was killed, and similar slaughters of Greeks by Turks took place in Chios and other places. The part of Greece that was eventually liberated formed its own independent Church that was anathematized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Monasticism declined sharply; secularism increased.

As the century progressed, other Orthodox Balkan nations followed the Greek example in rebelling from the Turks. The results were depressingly similar - hatred, cruelty and murder on both sides. And worst of all, instead of cooperating with each other against the common enemy, they fought bitter wars against each other. Thus Greeks, Bulgars and Serbs fought against each other for decades over Macedonia (a problem that is still not solved to this day). And after uniting with each other against the Turks in the First Balkan War of 1912, Greeks, Serbs, Montenegrins and Romanians (together with the Turks!) combined against the Bulgars in the Second Balkan War of 1913.

The nineteenth century saw the rise of a pernicious doctrine that may have had its origin in the heterodox West, but came to be embraced with especial passion in the Orthodox East (outside Russia), the doctrine, namely, that the boundaries of a nation-state should coincide with the boundaries of the

population of that nation. The consequence of this doctrine is that if significant numbers of a certain national population live beyond the boundaries of the “mother” nation-state and in another state, then war can be declared – or, if war is impractical at the present time, terrorist acts committed – with the aim of extending the boundaries of the nation-state to include the “stray sheep”. Not only did this doctrine directly contravene the apostolic teaching on obedience to the powers that be (of whatever nationality or faith they may be): it was a recipe for unending political instability and war...

There was a corollary of this doctrine that turned out to be hardly less pernicious: the idea, namely, that minorities who do not belong to the dominant nationality of the nation-state can be treated as “strangers” who can be repressed or driven out in order to maintain the homogeneity and “purity” of the dominant nationality. But this contravened the commandment: “Ye shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22.21)...

Russia was the only Orthodox country that rejected this revolutionary doctrine of *nationalist revanchism*. One obvious reason for that, of course, was that such a doctrine would, of course, have quickly led to the dissolution of her multi-national empire. But Tsar Nicholas II took a more principled view. Following in the Roman Christian imperial tradition, he regarded the welfare of all his subjects, of whatever nationality, as equally his responsibility. Thus he refused to treat even those minorities that were most aggressive and rebellious as enemies, calling them “*my Jews*” and “*my Poles*”.

Similarly, he tried to temper and restrain the nationalism of the Balkan Orthodox. However, he also felt obliged to protect them when they were doing badly against their enemies or being unjustly treated by them ...

The Balkan Orthodox of this period were in danger of forgetting that the Lord Jesus Christ, though a fervent Lover of His earthly homeland, set His face firmly against Jewish nationalism. Christ refused to join the secret insurrection against Roman power that the Pharisees were planning, and it was His opposition to this national liberation movement that cost Him His life. For the leaders of the Jews feared that His opposition would guarantee the failure of the revolution: “If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11.48). The leaders of the Jews were secret revolutionaries; they wished to throw off the hated Roman yoke; and in 70, and again in 135, they openly rose up against Rome. But Christ had made it clear that he did not want to be a nationalist liberator-king in their image (John 6.15); He had refused to be drawn into the revolutionary act of refusing to pay tax to Caesar (Matthew 17.27; 22.21). Therefore the chief priests and Pharisees turned against Him, fearing (rightly) that Israel under Christ would not be a nation like other nations, pursuing purely nationalist and materialist ambitions, but would return to what God had always intended her to be – the core-people of His Church, and a light for the Gentile nations whereby they, too, could join His Church and become His

people. And so great was their enmity towards Christ on this account, that in order to secure His condemnation at the hands of the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate they were prepared even to renounce their proud claim to being the people whose King was God alone, crying: "We have no king but Caesar..." (John 19.15)²⁸¹

Once the Jews had renounced their true King and God for the sake of their revanchist hopes, they were punished as no other nation has ever been punished. In 70 AD the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and vast numbers of Jews were killed, starved to death or sold into slavery. Jewish revanchism was crushed because God willed that His fallen people, because of their sins, should remain under a foreign yoke...

Fortunately, there were also examples of true Christian universalism in this period. The most striking example was provided by the Russian Archbishop Nicholas (Kasatkin), the Apostle of Japan... On the eve of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05, "alarmed by the possibility of war with their co-religionists, the Orthodox Japanese turned to their bishop. He replied that they, like all Japanese, were obliged by their oath to carry out their military duty, but to fight was not at all the same as to hate one's enemy, but meant to defend one's fatherland. The Saviour Himself bequeathed patriotism to us when He sorrowed over the lot of Jerusalem. The archpastor himself decided to stay in Japan with his flock, even if there was a war...

"It began in February 1904. Then Bishop Nicholas handed over all ecclesiastical affairs to the council of priests, and himself served his last liturgy before the war. At the end of the service in his farewell sermon to his flock he called on it to pray for victory for their fatherland, but he, as a subject of the Russian Emperor, could not take part in the common service; but he would be happy to see his flock carrying out their duty. In his encyclical of February 11, 1904, Bishop Nicholas blessed the Japanese to carry out their duty, not sparing their lives, but reminded them that our fatherland is the Church, where all Christians constitute one family; he told them to pray for the re-establishment of peace and asked for mercy to prisoners of war. After this he shut himself away and gave himself over to exploits of prayer...

"Nobody in Russia understood the hierarch of Japan as well as Emperor Nicholas II. At the end of the war the Tsar wrote to him: 'You have shown before all that the Orthodox Church of Christ is foreign to worldly dominion and every tribal hatred, and embraces all tribes and languages with her love. In the difficult time of the war, when the weapons of battle destroy peaceful relations between peoples and rulers, you, in accordance with the command of Christ, did not leave the flock entrusted to you, and the grace of love and faith

²⁸¹ See Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), "Christ the Savior and the Jewish Revolution", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 35, no. 4, July-August, 1985.

gave you strength to endure the fiery trial and amidst the hostility of war to keep the peace of faith and love in the Church created by your labours..."²⁸²

The Twentieth Century

By the beginning of the twentieth century, many were coming to believe that war had become almost unthinkable as an instrument of policy.

First, technological advances were increasing its sheer destructive power immeasurably, with the very real possibility of whole national populations being wiped out. Could even the most just of wars justify such massive slaughters of innocents?

Secondly, because of the spread of the nationalist virus, wars now involved, not just professional armies, as in the dynastic conflicts of earlier centuries, but *whole populations*; the wars became wars, not between governments or armies, but between whole peoples. Alexander Yanov writes: "On May 13, 1901, delivering a speech in the House of Commons, Churchill stated that 'the wars of peoples will be more terrible than those of kings' and that such wars 'can only end in the ruin of the vanquished and the scarcely less fatal commercial dislocation and exhaustion of the conquerors.' In Churchill's opinion, Europe was facing exactly that kind of peoples' war."²⁸³

Thirdly, the world was becoming so inter-connected that a local war – say, in the Balkans – could quickly develop into something far larger.

All three factors converged to create the First World War of 1914-18, which killed more people and caused more deaths and greater destruction than any before it, especially for the Orthodox. Two Orthodox nations, Serbia and Russia, were closely involved in its outbreak. Was their conduct just?

For the Serbs it was indeed a just war, because, although the spark that caused it – the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand – was ignited by the nationalist passion of a Bosnian Serb, who was probably helped by the Serbian intelligence establishment, nevertheless the Serbian government itself was not involved and did everything it could to pacify the Austrians.

In the case of Russia, the justice of the war was still more pronounced. Tsar Nicholas went to war in order to save his fellow-Orthodox, the Serbs, thereby laying down his own life out of love for his neighbour. For he knew as well as anyone that for Russia to fight against such powerful enemies would almost certainly give the enemy within the chance it had been waiting for to seize power. But the commandment of love, the fulfillment of his promises to his

²⁸² *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 1982; in Fomin S. and Formina T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, p. 372.

²⁸³ Alexander Yanov, "The Lessons of the First World War, or Why Putin's Regime is Doomed", September 5, 2014, <http://www.imrussia.org/en/analysis/nation/800-the-lessons-of-the-first-world-war-or-why-putins-regime-is-doomed>.

allies, and the protection of Russian Orthodoxy against German Protestantism²⁸⁴, compelled him to fight anyway.

And yet by the end of 1940s not only Russia and Serbia, but also Greece, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Romania had been wiped off the map as Orthodox states, with either communist dictatorships or pseudo-Orthodox democracies in their place. This was because, with the fall in 1917 of “him that restraineth” the coming of the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2.7), the Orthodox Emperor, the possibility of a fully just war, in the sense of a war for the true faith, and for the protection of true believers, became impossible. True, in the inter-war years the small Balkan Orthodox kingdoms continued to struggle; but their possibilities of action were extremely limited, and by the end of the Second World War they, too, had disappeared.

After the foundation of NATO in 1949, it was still possible to fight a just war in defense of king (or parliament) and country. But to say that one was fighting for *God* and *His* justice was possible only with heavy qualifications. For neither of the two main contestants – secular democracy led by America, and atheist communion led by the Soviet Union – set the restoration of Orthodoxy and the true worship of God as their aim.

This is not to say that they were equally evil – by no means. The Soviet Union was the first state in history that was *curse*d by the Orthodox Church (in the Moscow Council of 1918), and cooperation with the God-hating anti-authority that murdered tens of millions of Orthodox was forbidden under pain of anathema. That is why the Russian Church Abroad supported the United States in its struggle against the communists in Vietnam.

However, the Antichrist cannot be restrained by any other power than the God-anointed power of the Orthodox monarchy. Therefore even when the democratic West triumphed over the communist East in 1989-91, there was only temporary relief for the true believers. Soon the process of religious and civilizational degradation resumed in the formerly Orthodox lands of Eastern Europe, as the servants of the collective Antichrist both in Church and State remained firmly in place (but now with different ideological labels).

Nor has the Orthodox cause been helped by supposedly post-communist and democratic regimes, such as Putin’s Russia, carrying out revanchist wars in the name of Orthodoxy but in fact in order to preserve the power of communist/fascist dictators and thieves. The deceptive pseudo-Orthodoxy of these revanches was made manifest by their evil works, their heresies and, above all, by their cruelty...

Conclusion: The True Revanche

²⁸⁴ Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), *The Orthodox Faith and War*, Jordanville, 2003, pp. 8-9.

At a time when a new paganism has enshrouded the whole of the inhabited earth in a gloom still deeper than in the time of the early Christians, the example of their discretion, faith and patience is especially important. We must reject the seductive but false path of revanchism, which has only brought the Orthodox terrible suffering and defeat while defiling the image of the Faith in the rest of the world. Instead, we must wait in faith and hope for the appearance of a true successor of St. Constantine, and follow only him, rejecting all pretenders and pseudo-Orthodox saviours. We must act above all *in moral and doctrinal purity, not out of hatred for enemies, but out of love for the truth*. There is a time for peace, and a time for war, a time patiently to accept the chastisement of the Lord as He takes away our power and our lands because of our sins, and a time when, turning from strict justice to mercy, the Lord gives the signal and again grants victory to *truly* Orthodox armies led by a *truly* Orthodox king for the sake of the resurrection of *True* Orthodoxy. This will be the true and God-blessed Revanche, the timing of which will be revealed to all those who wait and watch in faith. Until then, our watchword must be: "By your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21.19)...

September 17/30, 2014; revised March 4/17, 2016.

[Appendix: Orthodox Prayer for Protection of Soldiers during War](#)

O Holy Master, Almighty Father and Pre-Eternal God, Who alone hast made and directed all things; Who risest up quickly against the evil of the impious ones; Who, by Providence, teachest Thy people the preservation of Justice and the obliteration of the sword on earth; Who condescendest to raise up military columns to help the people: O God, Who commanded the Forerunner John to say to the soldiers coming to him in the desert, "Do not intimidate anyone ... and be content with your wages":

We entreat Thee with compunction: as Thou gavest Thy child David the power to defeat Goliath, and as Thou didst condescend, through Judas Maccabeus, to seize victory from the arrogant pagans who would not call upon Thy Name; so too, grant protection in righteousness and truth to these Thy servants against the enemies rising against them, and by Thy heavenly loving-kindness, grant strength and might for the preservation of faith and truth.

Condescend out of Thy mercy, O Master, to grant them the fear of Thee, together with humility, obedience and good endurance; that they kill no one unrighteously, but rather preserve all righteousness and truth; that they may fear Thee and honour Justice; that they run in friendship to those who are scattered, extending Thy love to those near them, serving the elderly with justice; and that their ranks fulfil all things righteously;

For thou art our God, and to Thee do we ascribe glory; to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

[20. 1922: THE ASIA MINOR CATASTROPHE](#)

When Eleutherios Venizelos came to power in Greece during the First World War, he began to purge, not only the military and the civil service, but also the

Orthodox Church. Thus when Metropolitan Theocletos of Athens anathematized him in 1916, he had him defrocked. Then he recalled his friend and fellow Cretan and Freemason, Meletios Metaxakis, from America and enthroned him as Archbishop of Athens in November, 1918.²⁸⁵ Meletios immediately started commemorating Venizelos at the Liturgy instead of the King. This led to an ideological schism within the Synod between the Venizelists and the Royalists. The latter included St. Nectarios of Pentapolis and Metropolitan Germanos of Demetrias, the future leader of the True Orthodox Church. Almost simultaneously, Patriarch Germanos V of Constantinople was forced into retirement when his flock protested against what they saw as his compromising politics in relation to the Turks.²⁸⁶

Now the Greek government wanted to introduce the western, Gregorian calendar into Greece. And so Meletios promptly, in January, 1919, raised this question in the Church. The only obstacle to the introduction of the new calendar, he declared, was the Apostolic Canon forbidding the celebration of Pascha at the same time as the Jewish Passover or before the spring equinox. But since, he went on, "the government feels the necessity of changing to the Gregorian calendar, let it do so without touching the ecclesiastical calendar." And he set up a Commission to investigate the question.²⁸⁷

The Commission was set up with Metropolitan Germanos of Demetrias as the representative of the hierarchy. In May 20, 1919, on the initiative of Meletios Metaxakis, the Synod raised the question of changing to the new calendar. Meletios told the Synod: "The situation in Russia has changed, and the possibility of becoming closer to the West has become more real. We consider it necessary to introduce a rapid calendar reform." However, the Commission headed by Metropolitan Germanos was more cautious: "In the opinion of the Commission, the change of the Julian calendar provided it does not contradict canonical and dogmatic bases, could be realised on condition that all the other Orthodox Autocephalous Churches agree, and first of all, the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, to which it would be necessary to present the initiative in any action in this sphere, so long as we do not change to the Gregorian calendar, but compose a new, more scientifically exact Gregorian calendar, which would be free from the inadequacies of both of the calendars – the Julian and the Gregorian – at present in use."

"One of the committee members who voted in favour of this position," writes Fr. Basile Sakkas, "was Chrysostom Papadopoulos, then an Archimandrite and Professor of Theology at the University of Athens."²⁸⁸ In 1919 he had declared that if the Church changed the calendar it would become

²⁸⁵ "To imerologiakon skhisma apo istorikes kai kanonikes apopseos exetazomenon" (The Calendar Schism from an Historical and Canonical Point of View), *Agios Agathangelos Esphigmenites* (St. Agathangelos of Esphigmenou), N 130, March-April, 1992, p. 16.

²⁸⁶ Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

²⁸⁷ Eleutherios Goutzidis, *Ekklesiologika Themata* (Ecclesiological Themes), Athens, 1980, pp. 67-68.

²⁸⁸ Sakkas, *The Calendar Question*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983, p. 23.

schismatic. But later, as Archbishop of Athens, he introduced the new calendar into the Greek Church...

When the conclusions of the commission had been read out, Meletios changed his tune somewhat: "We must not change to the Gregorian calendar at a time when a new and scientifically perfect calendar is being prepared. If the State feels that it cannot remain in the present calendar status quo, it is free to accept the Gregorian as the European calendar, while the Church keeps the Julian calendar until the new scientific calendar is ready."²⁸⁹

Two things are clear from these events of 1919. First, Meletios was very anxious to accommodate the government if he could. And yet he must have realized that blessing the adoption of the new calendar by the State would inevitably generate pressure for its introduction into the Church as well. Secondly, while he did not feel strong enough to introduce the new calendar into the Church at that time, he was not in principle against it, because he either did not understand, or did not want to understand, the reasons for the Church's devotion to the Julian calendar, which have nothing to do with scientific accuracy, and all to do with faithfulness to the Tradition and Canons of the Church and the maintenance of Her Unity.

The new calendar was not the only innovation Meletios wanted to introduce: what he wanted, writes Bishop Ephraim, "was an Anglican Church with an eastern tint, and the faithful people in Greece knew it and distrusted everything he did. While in Athens, he even forbade the chanting of vigil services (!) because he considered them out of date and a source of embarrassment when heterodox – especially Anglicans – visited Athens. The people simply ignored him and continued to have vigils secretly."²⁹⁰

However, the heart of Greek Orthodoxy was not Athens, but Constantinople. It was necessary for Venizelos to get his own man on the Ecumenical throne. That man would eventually be Metaxakis.

But in the meantime, until Metaxakis could be transferred, he needed someone else to stir up the kind of nationalist ferment he needed. Fortunately for Venizelos, the patriarchal *locum tenens* in 1919, Metropolitan Dorotheos of Prussa, was just the right man for the job. He introduced two important and closely related innovations in the conduct of the patriarchate towards the Ottoman Empire, on the one hand, and the western heresies, on the other. Thus on January 21, 1919, protected by a Greek-Cretan regiment stationed in the city, Dorotheos proceeded to abolish the teaching of Turkish in Greek schools. Then, on March 16, a resolution for "Union with Greece" was passed in the Constantinopolitan churches, after which the patriarchate and the Greeks refused to communicate with the Sublime Porte. When the Greeks also refused

²⁸⁹ Goutzidis, *Ekklesiologika Themata*, Athens, 1980, p. 68.

²⁹⁰ Monk (now Metropolitan of Boston) Ephraim, *Letter on the Calendar Issue*, Brookline, Mass.: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1968, second edition 1979, St. Nectarios Educational Series, N 2.

to participate in the November elections, the break with the Turkish authorities was complete.

The patriarchate had in effect carried out a political coup d'état against the Ottoman Empire, thereby reversing a 466-year tradition of submission to the Muslims in the political sphere.²⁹¹ Since such a daring coup required political and military support from outside, the patriarchate set about making friends with those to whom, from a religious point of view, it had always been inimical. Thus in January, 1919, a Greek-Armenian conference was held to coordinate the activities of the two groups in the city.²⁹² Then, in the summer, Metropolitan Nicholas of Caesarea in the name of the patriarchate accepted the invitation of the Joint Commission of the World Conference on Faith and Order, a forerunner of the World Council of Churches, to participate in its preliminary conference in Geneva the following year. He said that the patriarchate was "thereby stretching out a hand of help to those working in the same field and in the same vineyard of the Lord". This statement, which in effect recognized that the western heretics belonged to the True Church, was probably the first statement from the Ecumenical Patriarchate explicitly endorsing the great heresy of *ecumenism*.

Then, in January, 1920, Metropolitan Dorotheos and his Synod issued what was in effect a charter for Ecumenism. This encyclical was the product of a conference of professor-hierarchs of the Theological School at Khalki, led by Metropolitan Germanos of Seleucia (later of Thyateira and Great Britain).

It was addressed "to all the Churches of Christ everywhere", and declared that "the first essential is to revive and strengthen the love between the Churches, not considering each other as strangers and foreigners, but as kith and kin in Christ and united co-heirs of the promise of God in Christ."

It went on: "This love and benevolent disposition towards each other can be expressed and proven especially, in our opinion, through:

"(a) the reception of a single calendar for the simultaneous celebration of the great Christian feasts by all the Churches;

"(b) the exchange of brotherly epistles on the great feasts of the single calendar..;

"(c) close inter-relations between the representatives of the different Churches;

²⁹¹ Alexis Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations, 1918-1974*, Athens: Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 1983, pp. 54-57.

²⁹² Alexandris, op. cit., p. 58.

“(d) intercourse between the Theological Schools and the representatives of Theological Science and the exchange of theological and ecclesiastical periodicals and writings published in each Church;

“(e) the sending of young people to study from the schools of one to another Church;

“(f) the convening of Pan-Christian conferences to examine questions of common interest to all the Churches;

“(g) the objective and historical study of dogmatic differences..;

“(h) mutual respect for the habits and customs prevailing in the different Churches;

“(i) the mutual provision of prayer houses and cemeteries for the funeral and burial of members of other confessions dying abroad;

“(j) the regulation of the question of mixed marriages between the different confessions;

“(k) mutual support in the strengthening of religion and philanthropy.”²⁹³

The unprecedented nature of the encyclical consists in the facts that: (1) it was addressed not, as was Patriarch Joachim’s encyclical of 1903, to the Orthodox Churches only, but to the Orthodox and heretics together, as if they were all equally “co-heirs of God in Christ”; (2) the proposed rapprochement was seen as coming, not through the acceptance by the heretics of the Truth of Orthodoxy and their sincere repentance and rejection of their errors, but through other means; and (3) a single universal calendar for concelebration of the feasts was proposed, in contravention of the canonical law of the Orthodox Church.

There is no mention here of the only possible justification of meetings with heretics from an Orthodox point of view – the opportunity it provides of conducting missionary work among them. On the contrary, one of the first aims of the ecumenical movement was and is to *prevent* proselytism among the member-Churches. That is why the potential proselytes from among the Catholics and Protestants are declared to be in no need of conversion, being already “co-heirs of God in Christ”.

From this time the Ecumenical Patriarchate became an active participant in the ecumenical movement, sending representatives to its conferences in Geneva in 1920, in Lausanne in 1927 and in Edinburgh in 1937.²⁹⁴ The World

²⁹³ Vasilios Stavrides, *Istoria tou Oikoumenikou Patriarkheiou (1453 – simeron)* (A History of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (1453 to the present day)), Thessalonica, 1987, pp. 248-249.

²⁹⁴ Stavrides, *op. cit.*, pp. 260, 247.

Conference on Faith and Order was organized on the initiative of the American Episcopalian Church; and the purpose of the Joint Commission's approaches to the Churches was that "all Christian Communion throughout the world which confess our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior" should be asked "to unite with us in arranging for and conducting such a conference".²⁹⁵

The real purpose of the 1920 encyclical was political, to gain the support of the western heretics, and especially the Anglicans, in persuading their governments to endorse Dorotheos' and Venizelos' plans for Greek control of Constantinople and Smyrna and its hinterland. Thus on February 24, 1920, Dorotheos wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury: "We beseech you energetically to fortify the British government... in its attempts to drive out the Turks [from Constantinople]. By this complete and final expulsion, and by no other means, the resurrection of Christianity in the Near East and the restoration of the church of Hagia Sophia can be secured."²⁹⁶

The tragedy of the Greek position was that, in spite of the support of the Anglican Church for Dorotheos, and of Lloyd George for Venizelos, the Allies never committed themselves to the creation of a Greek kingdom in Asia Minor. The reason was obvious: it would have meant full-scale war with Turkey - an unattractive prospect so soon after the terrible losses of the Great War, and when British troops were still fighting in Soviet Russia and other places. From the Allied Powers' point of view, their troops were stationed in Constantinople, not as a permanent occupation force, but only in order to protect the Christian minority. In fact, the Greeks, by their fiercely nationalist attitude, antagonized the Turks and led to the creation of a powerful Turkish nationalist movement, which eventually destroyed the centuries-old Greek civilization in Asia Minor. The Greeks forgot that one nationalism inevitably elicits another, equal and opposite nationalism...

In November, 1920, Venizelos was defeated at the elections. With him his brother Mason and Cretan Metaxakis also fell - temporarily. In February, 1921, he returned to America, campaigning on behalf of Venizelos, and presenting the novel argument that all the Orthodox in America should be under the Patriarchate of Constantinople because of Canon 28 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council.²⁹⁷ He also entered into communion with the Anglicans. Thus the Greek ambassador in Washington reported to the prefect in Thessalonica that on December 17, 1921, "vested, he took part in a service in an Anglican church,

²⁹⁵ Fr. George Macris, *The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement*, Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 1986, pp. 4-5.

²⁹⁶ Alexandris, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

²⁹⁷ This was reported in June, 1921 to the Serbian Orthodox Church by Bishop Nicholas (Velimirovich), who had been sent to America to investigate the needs of the Serbs there. Canon 28 talks about the "barbarian" lands in Thrace and other places being placed under Constantinople. Nobody before Metaxakis had interpreted it to mean jurisdiction over the whole world outside the traditional patriarchates...

knelt in prayer with the Anglicans before the holy table, which he venerated, gave a sermon, and blessed those present in the church” of the heretics.²⁹⁸

Meletios won over the epitropos of the Greek Archdiocese, Rodostolos Alexandros, and the two of them first broke relations with the Church of Greece. Then, at a clergy-laity conference in the church of the Holy Trinity, New York, he declared the autonomy of the Greek Archdiocese from the Church of Greece, changing its name to the grandiloquent: “Greek Archbishopric of North and South America”. This was more than ironical, since it had been Metaxakis himself who had created the archdiocese as a diocese of the Church of Greece when he had been Archbishop of Athens in 1918! Metaxakis’ new diocese broke Church unity in another way, in that it was done without the blessing of the Russian Church, which until then had included all the Orthodox of all nationalities in America under its own jurisdiction. And once the Greeks had formed their own diocese, other nationalities followed suit. Thus on August 14, 1921 Patriarch Gregory of Antioch asked Patriarch Tikhon’s blessing to found a Syrian diocese in North America. Tikhon replied on January 17, 1922 that the Antiochian Patriarch would first have to get the agreement of the Russian bishops in America...

Meanwhile, the Patriarchate in Constantinople was still beating the nationalist and anti-monarchist drum. In December, 1920, it called for the resignation of the king for the sake of the Hellenic nation, and even considered excommunicating him! Then, in March, a patriarchal delegation headed by Metropolitan Dorotheos travelled to London, where they met Lord Curzon, the British foreign secretary, King George V and the archbishop of Canterbury – the first such trip to the West by the senior prelate of Orthodoxy since Patriarch Joseph’s fateful participation in the council of Florence in 1438. And there, like Joseph, Dorotheos had a heart attack and died, just as he was to receive the honorary vice-presidency of the World Congress for the friendship of the World through the Churches.²⁹⁹

The terrible tragedy that was about to be suffered by the Greek nation in Asia Minor must be attributed in no small part to God’s wrath at the nationalist-ecumenist politics of Dorotheos and his Synod – a classic example of the destructive consequences of the intrusion of political passions into the life of the Church.

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Greece was counted as a victor nation at Versailles in 1919. This gave Venizelos the opportunity to put his nationalist expansionist plans into effect. The French Prime Minister Briand had been right to suspect, some years before,

²⁹⁸ Archimandrite Theokletos A. Strangas, *Ekklesias Ellados Istoría* (A History of the Church of Greece), Athens, 1970, vol. II, p. 1118; quoted in “Oecumenical Patriarch Meletios (Metaxakis)”, *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. XVII, NN 2 & 3, 2000, p. 11.

²⁹⁹ Monk Paul, *Neoimerologitismos-Oikoumenismos* (Newcalendarism-Ecumenism), Athens, 1982, p. 35.

that “Venizelos may have very long teeth when peace negotiations open. He has not renounced his dream to recreate the Byzantine Empire... Now, a large-scale expansion of Greece would be a threat to the peace of the world. I have for a long time desired the cooperation of the Greeks but not under these conditions...”³⁰⁰

In May, 1919, the Italians, having withdrawn from the Paris Peace Conference, began to occupy parts of Turkey – Antalya in the south and Marmaris in the west. The other Great Powers were alarmed. This gave Venizelos his chance to try and put his “great idea” – the restoration of the Byzantine empire – into practice.

Margaret Macmillan writes: “He had been working hard from the start of the Peace Conference to press Greek claims, with mixed success. Although he tried to argue that the coast of Asia Minor was indisputably Greek in character, and the Turks in a minority, his statistics were highly dubious. For the inland territory he was claiming, where even he had to admit that the Turks were in a majority, Venizelos called in economic arguments. The whole area (the Turkish provinces of Aidin and Brusa and the areas around the Dardanelles and Izmir) was a geographic unit that belonged to the Mediterranean; it was warm, well watered, fertile, opening out to the world, unlike the dry and Asiatic plateau of the hinterland. The Turks were good workers, honest, in their relations, and a good people as subjects, he told the Supreme Council at his first appearance in February. ‘But as rulers they were insupportable and a disgrace to civilisation, as was proved by their having exterminated over a million Armenians and 300,000 Greeks during the last four years.’ To show how reasonable he was being, he renounced any claims to the ancient Greek settlements at Pontus on the eastern end of the Black Sea. He would not listen to petitions from the Pontine Greeks, he assured [the American official] House’s assistant, Bonsal: ‘I have told them that I cannot claim the south shore of the Black Sea, as my hands are quite full with Thrace and Anatolia.’ There was a slight conflict with Italian claims, but he was confident the two countries could come to a friendly agreement. They had, in fact, already tried and it had been clear that neither was prepared to back down, especially on Smyrna.

“The thriving port of Smyrna lay at the heart of Greek claims. It had been Greek in the great Hellenic past and in the nineteenth century had become predominantly Greek again as immigrants from the Greek mainland had flocked there to take advantage of the new railways which stretched into the hinterland and opportunities for trade and investment. The population was at least a quarter of a million before the war and more Greeks lived there than in Athens itself. They dominated the exports – from figs to opium to carpets – which coursed down from the Anatolian plateau in Asia Minor. Smyrna was a Greek city, a centre of Greek learning and nationalism – but it was also a crucial part of the Turkish economy.

³⁰⁰ Briand, in Misha Glenny, *The Balkans, 1804-1999*, London: Granta Books, 2000, pp. 348-349.

“When Venizelos reached out for Smyrna and its hinterland, he was going well beyond what could be justified in terms of self-determination. He was also putting Greece into a dangerous position. Taking the fertile valleys of western Asia Minor was perhaps necessary, as he argued, to protect the Greek colonies along the coast. From another perspective, though, it created a Greek province with a huge number of non-Greeks as well as a long line to defend against anyone who chose to attack from central Anatolia. His great rival General Metaxas, later dictator of Greece, warned of this repeatedly. ‘The Greek state is not today ready for the government and exploitation of so extensive a territory.’ Metaxas was right.”³⁰¹

The Italians and the Americans rejected the Greek claims on Smyrna; but the British and the French were sympathetic. The deadlock was resolved when the Italians walked out of the Peace Conference and landed troops on the coast of Western Asia Minor. This gave Lloyd George his chance to intervene on behalf of Venizelos. The Americans were won over, and the Greeks were told that they could land in Smyrna and “wherever there is a threat of trouble or massacre”.

“The whole thing,” wrote Henry Wilson, the British military expert, “is mad and bad” ...³⁰²

Lord Curzon, the soon-to-be British Foreign Minister, was also worried, though he was far from being a Turkophile. As he said: “The presence of the Turks in Europe has been a source of unmitigated evil to everybody concerned. I am not aware of a single interest, Turkish or otherwise, that during nearly 500 years has benefited from that presence.”³⁰³ “That the Turks should be deprived of Constantinople is, in my opinion, inevitable and desirable as the crowning evidence of their defeat in war, and I believe that it will be accepted with whatever wrathful reluctance by the Eastern world.” “But,” he went on, “when it is realized that the fugitives are to be kicked from pillar to post and that there is to be practically no Turkish Empire and probably no Caliphate at all, I believe that we shall be giving a most dangerous and most unnecessary stimulus to Moslem passions throughout the Eastern world and that sullen resentment may easily burst into savage frenzy”. And he called the landing in Smyrna “the greatest mistake that had been made in Paris”.³⁰⁴

The landing took place on May 15, 1919. Unfortunately, it was handled badly, and some hundreds of Turkish civilians were killed. Although the Greeks arrested those responsible and did all they could to make amends, international opinion, stirred up by Turkish propaganda and the American representative in Constantinople, Admiral Bristol, began to turn against them, ignoring the mass slaughter of Greeks in Western Asia Minor, Pontus and the Caucasus. Then, on May 16, Kemal Ataturk slipped out of Constantinople on

³⁰¹ Macmillan, *Peacemakers*, London: John Murray, 2003, pp. 440-441.

³⁰² Macmillan, *op. cit.*, p. 443.

³⁰³ Curzon, in Matthew Stewart, “Catastrophe at Smyrna”, *History Today*, vol. 54 (7), July, 2004, pp. 28-29.

³⁰⁴ Macmillan, *op. cit.*, p. 451.

an Italian pass, and arrived in Samsun to organize the nationalist movement that eventually defeated the Greeks and created the modern state of Turkey. By the end of the year he had created a new Turkish capital in Ankara. Although, on May 20, the Allies had recognized the Sultan, and not Ataturk, as Turkey's legitimate ruler, the Italians were already secretly negotiating with Ataturk, and the French were not slow to follow suit. Only the British – more precisely, Lloyd George – continued to support Venizelos.

On June 14, Venizelos asked the Supreme Council to allow the Greeks to extend their occupation zone. However, the western powers said no. They were exhausted from more than four years of war, had already been demobilizing their armies around the globe, and with the defeat of the Whites in Russia, this process accelerated. The last thing they wanted was another full-scale war with the Turks. Besides, the Americans were concerned that their Standard Oil Company should have large concessions in Mesopotamia, which they believed Ataturk could give them, and the French wanted an intact Turkey in order to pay back her pre-war loans. The British toyed with the idea of supporting an independent Kurdistan in Ataturk's rear, but by the spring of 1920 this plan had been dropped. Soon they also abandoned their protectorates in Georgia and Baku.

In April, 1920, the Sultan's government appealed to the allies to help him fight Ataturk, but the allies refused. In fact, the French were already arming Ataturk by this time. In spite of this, in May, the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres were announced. They were harsh on Turkey, ceding Smyrna to the Greeks, founding a free Armenia and creating a free Kurdistan. The eastern part of Asia Minor was divided up into French, Italian and British occupation zones; Mesopotamia and the Straits were ceded to Britain, and Syria to France. Constantinople was kept as an international city, and the Turkish army was reduced to a token force. But none of this was going to become reality... The Treaty also ignored the territorial concessions to Russia that had been agreed during the Great War. This incensed the Soviets, who now began to support Kemal...

As the Turkish nationalist forces advanced westwards, they encountered British troops about one hundred miles from Constantinople. The British drove them off, but called for reinforcements. There were no British reinforcements, so it had to be Greek ones. In June, Lloyd George and the Supreme Council agreed to Venizelos' plans to move inland from Smyrna to relieve the pressure exerted by Kemal on the British at Chanak.

“The British high commissioner in Constantinople wrote angrily to Curzon: ‘The Supreme Council, thus, are prepared for a resumption of general warfare; they are prepared to do violence to their own declared principles; they are prepared to perpetuate bloodshed indefinitely in the Near East, and for what? To maintain M. Venizelos in power in Greece for what cannot in the nature of things be more than a few years at the outside.’ Curzon agreed completely:

'Venizelos thinks his men will sweep the Turks into the mountains. I doubt it will be so.'"³⁰⁵

At first, however, the Greeks did well. They defeated the Turks at Chanak (present-day Canakkale) and seized Eastern Thrace. By August, 1920, 100,000 soldiers had penetrated 250 miles inland. But the alarmed Allies then sent token forces of their own to separate the Greeks from the Turks. Harold Nicolson wrote: "By turning their guns against the Greeks - their own allies - the Great Powers saved Kemal's panic-stricken newly-conscripted army at the eleventh hour from final destruction."³⁰⁶

In October, the French signed a treaty with Ataturk's government, which enabled them to withdraw their troops from Cilicia, which freed more Turkish troops for the Greek front. The Turks were now receiving supplies from the Italians, the French and the Soviets, and began to regroup in the centre of the country... In November Venizelos and his liberal party suffered a stunning and quite unexpected defeat in the Greek elections. King Constantine returned to power. This made no difference to the war because the king felt honour-bound to try and finish what Venizelos had begun. Or rather, it made things worse, because the king then conducted a purge of pro-Venizelos officers which weakened the army at a critical time.

On March 25, 1921, on the one-hundredth anniversary of the Greek revolution, meetings took place in five hundred Cypriot churches, and petitions were addressed to the English authorities that Cyprus should be reunited with Greece. At the same time the Greek army in Asia Minor began its advance on Ankara; soon they had won control of the whole of the western escarpment of the Anatolian plateau. However, on March 31 the Turks conducted a successful counter-attack.

The Greeks would have been well-advised to seek peace at this point, but they did not. Massacres of Turks were taking place in the Greek-controlled region, and of Greeks in the Turk-controlled region. Passions were too high for either side to contemplate peace. In the summer King Constantine arrived in Smyrna, and it was agreed to resume the advance. In August the Greeks arrived at the summit of Mount Tchal, overlooking Ankara. However, they were in a poor state, hungry, diseased and in danger of having their lines of communication cut by Turkish irregulars. The Turks counter-attacked, and September 11 the Greeks retreated to the west bank of the Sakarya river. "For approximately nine months," wrote Sir Winston Churchill, "the Turks waited comfortably in the warmth while the Greeks suffered throughout the icy-cold of the severe winter"³⁰⁷ Finally, on August 26, 1922, the Turks began a general offensive. The Greek army was routed. Early in September the Turkish army

³⁰⁵ Macmillan, *op. cit.*, p. 459.

³⁰⁶ Nicolson, *History, 1919-1925*, 1934, p. 250; quoted in Jean de Murat, *The Great Extirpation of Hellenism & Christianity in Asia Minor*, Miami, 1999, p. 95.

³⁰⁷ Churchill, *Memoirs*; in Murat, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

entered Smyrna, the Greek Metropolitan Chrysostom was murdered and the city deliberately set on fire.

At this moment Lord Beaverbrook arrived in Constantinople on a special mission for the British. On learning the facts, he told the American Admiral Bristol: "Our behaviour to the Greeks was rotten! We have behaved to them with dirty duplicity! They were prompted and supported by us in beginning their campaign. But we abandoned them without support at their most critical moment so that the Turks could exterminate them and destroy them forever! Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, supported them and prompted them himself to make the landing at Smyrna. He supported them with every means except for giving them money which his Treasury did not have to give. And now we are leaving them exposed to disaster!" Then he turned to Admiral Bristol: "And what are you doing in this matter?"³⁰⁸

The Allies did nothing: allied ships in Smyrna were ordered to observe strict "neutrality", and the Greek government failed to send any of its own. It took the heroic efforts of a Methodist minister from New York, Asa Jennings, to galvanize the Greeks and the Allies into action, and a massive evacuation began. Then the Greek government fell, the king resigned, Prime Minister Gounaris was executed together with six army leaders³⁰⁹, and Colonels Nicholas Plastiras and Stylianus Gonatas took control. But the evacuation continued, and hundreds of thousands were rescued from certain death either through fire or at the hands of the Turks. Nevertheless, it is calculated that 100,000 Greeks died in Smyrna, with many thousands of other nationalities, while 160,000 were deported into the interior in terrible conditions.

Meanwhile, writes Adam Tooze, "on 23 September 1922, a battalion-strength detachment of Turkish troops entered the neutralized buffer zone within full view of the British forces. London ordered an ultimatum to be delivered demanding their immediate withdrawal. Britain and nationalist Turkey were on the point of full-scale war. The prospect was daunting, not only because the Turks outgunned the British on the spot, but because behind Ataturk, as behind Germany at Rapallo, stood the Soviet Union. The Soviets were believed to have offered submarines with which to break the Royal Navy's stranglehold of the eastern Mediterranean. On 18 September British naval forces were ordered to sink any Soviet vessels that approached them. To make matters worse, a week earlier the Greek Army rebelled against the 'pro-German' king they blamed for the disaster in Anatolia. This was no fascist takeover avant la lettre. The aim of the coup was to restore Lloyd George's great ally, the pro-Western Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos. But this meant riding roughshod over the will of the Greek electorate.

³⁰⁸ Murat, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

³⁰⁹ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, vol. 2, pp. 131-132, 173-174; "1922-1982", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October 4/17, 1982.

“At no point, until the confrontation with Hitler over the Sudetenland, was Britain closer to entering a major war. And Lloyd George’s position was based on bluff. If fighting had broken out, the British would almost certainly have been overwhelmed. Perhaps not surprisingly the British commander on the spot chose not to deliver the aggressive ultimatum. On 11 October 1922 an armistice was negotiated. War was averted...”³¹⁰

But for Greece the tragedy was already accomplished. Fr. Raphael Moore calculates that the following numbers of Greeks were killed in Asia Minor: in 1914 - 400,000 in forced labour brigades; 1922 - 100,000 in Smyrna; 1916-22 - 350,000 Pontians during forced deportations; 1914-22 - 900,000 from maltreatment, starvation in all other areas.³¹¹ At the Treaty of Lausanne in July, 1923 the Turkish nation state was established: the “Great Idea” of Greek nationalism was dead, drowned in a sea of blood...

October 9/22, 2015.

³¹⁰ Tooze, *The Deluge*, London: Penguin, 2015, pp. 437-438.

³¹¹ Moore, ORTHODOX@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU, January 17, 1999.

21. THE MILLENIUM

The twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse presents one of the most difficult problems of Biblical exegesis. In the early centuries of Christianity certain heretics, such as Cerinthus, interpreted the thousand-year reign of Christ referred to in verses 2 to 7 in an over-literal, sensual, Judaizing sense. They argued, linking this chapter with certain Messianic passages from the Old Testament, that after the defeat of the Antichrist Christ would come in a visible form to earth and reign with His saints from Jerusalem; that this period would last for literally a thousand years until the Last Judgement; that the bodies of the saints would be resurrected to enjoy all the pleasures of this earthly life; and that the Jews and their Mosaic law, with its sabbaths and circumcisions, would have dominion over all the nations of the earth.

Variations of this error, called "chiliasm" or "millenarianism", are to be found in every historical epoch. In modern times the creation of the State of Israel has stimulated its reappearance in many sects, notably the Jehovah's Witnesses. Some decades ago Fr. Seraphim Rose wrote: "The careful observer of the contemporary religious scene - especially in America, where the most popular religious currents have originated for over a century - cannot fail to notice a very decided air of chiliastic expectation. And this is not only true of 'charismatic' circles, but even of the traditionalist or fundamentalist circles that have rejected the 'charismatic revival'. Thus, many traditionalist Roman Catholics believe in the coming of a chiliastic 'Age of Mary' before the end of the world, and this is only one variant on the more widespread Latin error of trying to 'sanctify the world', or, as Archbishop Thomas Connolly of Seattle expressed it fifteen years ago, 'transforming the modern world into the Kingdom of God in preparation for His return.' Protestant evangelists such as Billy Graham, in their mistaken private interpretation of the Apocalypse, await the 'millenium' when 'Christ' will reign on earth. Other evangelists in Israel find that their millenarian interpretation of the 'Messiah' is just what is need to 'prepare' the Jews for his coming..."³¹²

However, "chiliasm" has never been precisely defined; and there were some Orthodox fathers and saints who, while avoiding the errors of the extreme Judaizers, interpreted the millenium in a fairly literal way. Thus St. Justin the Martyr writes: "There was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgement of all men would likewise take place."³¹³ While admitting that "many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise," he declared that he and others "who are right-minded Christians on all points are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and 1000

³¹² Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1990, pp. 212-213.

³¹³ St. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 81.

years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned and enlarged as the Prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah and others declare."³¹⁴

Several other fathers of the second and third centuries, such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Methodius of Olympus, are also classified as chiliasts, although they usually interpreted the figure of "1000 years" in a symbolical sense. These teachers were fighting especially against the heresy of Gnosticism, which rejected the flesh as evil and tended to interpret the resurrection of the dead in a purely spiritual sense. Irenaeus, in particular, inveighed against the over-allegorical interpretation of the prophecies. Lactantius, the tutor to the Emperor Constantine's son, was also a chiliast. Thereafter, however, a strong reaction set in against the teaching, led by the Church historian Eusebius. So strongly opposed to it was he that he described one of the early chiliast writers, St. Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, whom Irenaeus accepted as having heard the Apostle John himself, as "a man of very limited intelligence".³¹⁵

At the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, the Church introduced the phrase: "Whose Kingdom shall have no end" into the Symbol of the Faith, which some have interpreted as an implicit condemnation of chiliasm. In fact, according to some writers, the introduction of this phrase into the Symbol may not have been directed against chiliasm at all, or only against its cruder, Jewish variants.³¹⁶ So it is possible that the less extreme, more spiritual forms of the teaching were permitted. For even Blessed Jerome, who, with Blessed Augustine, was the foremost enemy of the teaching, while mocking the chiliasts as "our half-Jews"³¹⁷, in other places speaks of them with more respect, as holding views "which, although we may not hold, we cannot condemn, because many ecclesiastical men and martyrs have taught the same".³¹⁸ It is unlikely that he would have said this if the views of Saints Irenaeus, Hippolytus and others had been formally anathematized. Even Blessed Augustine, the real founder of the purely allegorical interpretation that holds sway at the present time, admits that there are "tolerable" kinds of chiliasm – that is, those kinds in which the delights of the millennium are "of a spiritual kind".³¹⁹

³¹⁴ St. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 80.

³¹⁵ Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 3, 39, 11.

³¹⁶ This is the view of Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia, who writes (personal communication, 21 January, 1997): "It seems more probable that it was directed against the theories of Marcellus of Ancyra (who was not a millenarian); Marcellus and his followers are mentioned in Canon One of the 381 Council. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, takes the view that the clause in question is aimed against Marcellus. Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology*, says nothing about any condemnation of millenarianism in 381."

³¹⁷ St. Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* 60.1, 66.20.

³¹⁸ St. Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah* 19.10.

³¹⁹ "Those who, because of the passage in this book, have suspected that the first resurrection is future and bodily, have been influenced, especially, among other things, by the number of a thousand years, to suppose that it were fitting that among the saints there should be during that time a kind of sabbatism, a holy vacation as it were after the labours of the six thousand years since man was created... This opinion would be somewhat tolerable, if the delights of that sabbath to be enjoyed by the saints were, through the presence of the Lord, of a spiritual kind."

From the fifth century, under the influence of Jerome and Augustine³²⁰, a purely spiritual conception of the millenium became prevalent, according to which the thousand-year reign of Christ represents the whole of Christian history between the First and Second Comings of Christ but excluding the reign of the Antichrist. Thus St. Andrew of Caesarea writes: "The number **thousand** signifies either many years or a perfect number. For it could signify many years in order that the Gospel should be preached throughout the world, and that the seeds of piety should be implanted in it; and it could signify a perfect number because in them we are called to abandon the childhood life under the law and come to the perfect man, the measure of the age of the fulfilment of Christ. And so the **thousand years** is the time from the incarnation of the Lord to the coming of the Antichrist, the time in the course of which the Gospel will be preached."

Similarly, Fr. Seraphim Rose understands the millennium in an Augustinian sense as "*now*; the life of grace in the Orthodox Church for the whole 'thousand years' between the First Coming of Christ and the time of Antichrist."³²¹ And this has become the dominant interpretation in recent times.

However, this interpretation is open to certain powerful objections; and below a third view is expounded, which takes a middle course between the more literal views of the second and third century Fathers, and the purely allegorical views of Jerome and Augustine. This view is presented very tentatively, and with continuing respect for those who think otherwise, However, it has the advantage of escaping the extremes of over-literalism and Judaism, on the one hand, and excessive allegorism, on the other.

What follows is an interpretation of the 20th chapter of Revelation verse by verse:-

20.1-3. And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed for a short time.

This image is immediately reminiscent of Revelation 9.1-3, where demons are released from the abyss to let loose (according to our interpretation) the Third World War, and Revelation 10.1, where an angel (the Archangel Michael?) descends from heaven to restore peace to the world. In view of the similarity of the imagery, it would be reasonable to suppose that the seer is here

For we too were at one time of this opinion." (*The City of God*, 20, 7, 1; translated by William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Fathers*, Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1970, vol. III, p. 104).

³²⁰ And even earlier than these, of the Donatist Bishop Tychonius, who died towards the end of the fourth century and very probably influenced St. Augustine. See Fr. Nicholas Kim, *The Thousand-Year Kingdom*, St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2003, pp. 217-220 (in Russian).

³²¹ Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, pp. 214-215.

witnessing the same events as in the earlier vision. If so, then there is a chronologically continuous transition between Revelation 19 and 20, just as there was between chapters 9 and 10, and not the abrupt break in the narrative that is postulated by the Augustinian interpretation. This transition is that between the terrible carnage of the Third World War, which was incited by the devil but in which Christ emerges as the Victor, and the period of peace afterwards, in which demonic activity is suppressed, at least temporarily. The nations are undeceived and come to the Faith of Christ for a period denoted symbolically as **a thousand years**, at the end of which the demons are again let loose to prepare the way for the Antichrist in his final form.

It should be noted, too, that whereas the beast and the false prophet are cast into the fire at the end of chapter 19, it is not until a chapter later, *after* the millenium, that we read that ***the devil was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are*** (20.10). This suggests that the punishment of the beast and the false prophet does not represent a full close or *last* judgement, but a *penultimate* judgement preceding that of the devil himself at the end of time.

Our hypothesis is that chapter 19 describes the defeat of the beast in his penultimate incarnation, as the seventh head of the beast, or *collective* Antichrist, while the end of chapter 20 represents the destruction of the *personal* Antichrist (here we agree with the Augustinians), followed by that of the devil at the very end of time.³²²

According to the Augustinian interpretation, Satan's **binding for a thousand years** represents his defeat by the Lord on the Cross, while his **deceiving the nations no more** signifies the whole history of the Church before the reign of the Antichrist. But is it reasonable to suppose that Satan has had so little success since the Coming of Christ that **the nations were deceived no more**? Is it not rather the case that most of the nations have been deceived for most of the time, and especially in the twentieth century? Christ bound the devil in hades in the sense that He made a way for those who believe in Him to escape the devil's snares and ascend without hindrance through the demonic toll-houses and into the Kingdom of Heaven after death. But at no time has the majority of mankind accepted His redemption; the nations have remained deceived – and especially at the present time of almost universal apostasy.

As Fr. Nicholas Kim writes (describing, not his own, but our point of view): “To portray the position of Satan in the contemporary world as the position of a prisoner, locked up in the abyss and unable seriously to ‘deceive the nations’ in any way for a period of a thousand years... is not to reckon with the facts as they are. Moreover, such an understanding presupposes an extremely allegorical interpretation both of this and of other places in the Holy Scriptures that talk about the activity of Satan in general and in our age in particular. And so, if Satan is continuing to deceive the nations today, as is evident from the

³²² Perhaps forty-five days later, as seems to be suggested by Daniel 12.11-12.

Holy Scriptures and the situation of affairs in the world, this means that at the present time he is not 'bound' in the abyss, and the **thousand years** mentioned in 20.2 is not taking place now, but will do in the future."³²³

Archbishop Averky suggests that the thousand years represents "the victory of the Church over paganism and the establishment of the Church on earth".³²⁴ This agrees with St. Andrew of Caesarea's interpretation that the binding of Satan signifies "the extermination of idolatry and the destruction of the idolaters' temples and the drying up of the blood on the altars, and the knowledge and fulfilment of the will of God throughout the world." It would suggest that the period from Constantine the Great to Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II is meant, from about 312 to 1917.³²⁵

And yet even in this period, and even confining the discussion to Europe and the Middle East alone, heresies such as Islam, Monophysitism, Papism and Protestantism have held sway over very large areas for long periods of time. Constantine's victory in the fourth century opened the way for the Christianization of the Mediterranean basin only; it may even be said to foreshadow the enlightening of the nations worldwide. But it cannot be said to constitute that enlightenment itself; for the majority of the nations have remained stubbornly unenlightened.

It would be most natural to interpret the phrase: **he should deceive the nations no more** to mean a more universal defeat of paganism and heresy than during the time of Constantine, a triumph of good over evil such as cannot be said to have taken place yet. This is the victory which, as so many prophets have foretold, will take place at the end of the Third World War, and which will be followed by the enlightenment of most of the nations with the light of the Orthodox Faith. It is the victory which the Lord Himself prophesied when He said: **This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come** (Matthew 24.14).

For who can say that the Orthodox Gospel – and it is certainly the Orthodox Gospel, and not the Catholic or Protestant or Ecumenist "Gospel" that is here meant, according to St. John Maximovich - has been preached throughout the whole world? It is impossible to say this when we consider that by far the largest nations on the planet, the Chinese and the Indians, not to mention the whole of South-East Asia, large parts of Africa and South America, have hardly been touched by it. Even heretical Christians constitute small minorities in these countries.

³²³ Bishop Peter of Tomsk interprets the thousand years to mean simply "a continuous period of time" (Kim, op. cit., p. 69).

³²⁴ Averky's interpretation, which was translated into English by Fr. Seraphim Rose, comes in volume II of his *Guide to the Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament* (Jordanville, 1956).

³²⁵ Bishop Peter, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, Tomsk, 1885; in Barsov, op. cit., p. 426.

And why is this triumph said to last for a thousand years? One suggestion is that this is the period in which **the fullness of the Gentiles** (Romans 11.25) comes in, which, coinciding as it does with the conversion of the Jews to Christ, sees the Church coming to her numerical fullness. For, on the one hand, the number one thousand signifies *fullness*³²⁶, and on the other the Church is often represented as a *kingdom*, the Kingdom of God Whose King is Christ.³²⁷ As St. Andrew of Caesarea writes: "The full number depicts abundance and perfection in the bringing forth of fruits. In the same way here the **thousand years** depicts the completed bringing forth of the fruits of faith."

Fully compatible with this idea is the further idea that the 1000-year Kingdom is the period in which the Kingdom of God on earth, that is, the Church, comes to her fullness not only in the numerical sense, but also in the revealing of the full depth of her doctrinal teaching on herself, that is, her ecclesiology. As Fr. Nicholas Kim puts it, "the 1000-year Kingdom is... the discovery of the fundamental principles of the faith of the Church, her self-identification as the economical Kingdom of Christ, as the Body of Christ, the witness of the Christology and ecclesiology of the apostolic era."³²⁸ For since, according to our hypothesis, the period immediately preceding the millennium is *the present age*, a period distinguished above all by arguments over *the nature of the Church*, it follows that the millennium itself will be the period in which these arguments are finally resolved (at the Eighth Ecumenical Council), when the Church will succeed in adding to the Christological and Trinitarian and Pneumatological definitions she has already worked out in the first millennium of Christian history new definitions (and anathematizations) on the nature of the Church herself as the Body of Christ and only Ark of salvation.

Bishop Peter of Tomsk writes: "Some understand by the beast the pagan Roman Empire, and count the thousand years as beginning from the time of Constantine the Great and until the end of the 13th century, when the Turkish empire was founded, and consider the Turks to be Gog and Magog. But others, while understanding by the beast the mysterious, antichristian Roman Empire, refer the thousand years to a time of the peaceful flourishing of the Church, which God has ordained for her on earth after the destruction of this empire hostile to her, and which had not yet come into being. This prophecy is closely linked with the previous one, which speaks of the destruction of the beast. This opinion is confirmed by: (1) the connection of speech. In the previous prophecy (ch. 19) it is said that after the destruction of the kingdom of the beast, hosts of saints and martyrs in their doxologies offered to God for His great goodness given to the Church, express the reason for their joy as (a) the fact that God has entered into His kingdom, that is, the kingdom of Christ (v. 6); and (b) the fact that the time for the celebration of the wedding of the Lamb has come and the bride has prepared herself (v. 7). Since this is said only briefly there, the Holy

³²⁶ See Kim, op. cit., pp. 164-165.

³²⁷ St. Augustine writes: "At the present time, too, the Church is the Kingdom of Christ and the Heavenly Kingdom. Therefore also at the present time the saints reign with Him" (*On the City of God*; quoted in Kim, op. cit., p. 187).

³²⁸ Kim, op. cit., p. 196.

Spirit wanted in this same order to explain it in more detail in the following prophecy, so that people should clearly know what happiness there will be for the Church after the destruction of the beast. The first happiness, that is, reign of Christ God, is revealed in the 20th chapter, in which it is said that after the destruction of the kingdom of the beast Jesus Christ will reign with the saints and martyrs sitting on thrones (v. 3). The last, that is, the celebration of the wedding of the Lamb is depicted in chapters 21 and 22. This is the connection of this prophecy with the preceding one. But if this prophecy about the thousand years refers to a previous time and is to be considered as inserted here, then the connection and order of the prophecies contained in chapters 19, 20, 21 and 22 is destroyed. (2) In this same prophecy it is clearly presupposed that the empire of the beast has already appeared in the world and has been destroyed. Thus in verse 4 it is said that the thrones were set, and on them sat to whom judgement was given, and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. In verse 10 it is said that Satan, who had deceived Gog and Magog, was cast into the fiery lake where the beast and the false prophet had already been finally cast, and in which they already were during the time when God determined that Gog and Magog should be judged and punished. But Gog and Magog will appear immediately after the passing of the thousand years and will perish. Besides, the kingdom of the beast and the glorious kingdom of Christ - which must spread throughout the world among all peoples, Satan being no longer able to deceive them with a false religion or persecute the confessors of the truth, - cannot coexist at the same time. Consequently, the thousand-year reign of Christ with the saints will be in the last times, after the destruction of the kingdom of the beast or antichristianity, when all the Jews and Gentiles will be united to the Church of Christ, which at that time will be cleansed from all errors, superstitions, deceptions and the crude vices of carnal people, which before that had never been seen. For Christ does not reign everywhere when there sit on the thrones not only those who confess His name only outwardly, but also pagans. The Kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of righteousness, truth, piety, love and peace with an abundance of spiritual goods and gifts, triumph over satan, over the spirit of the proud, luxurious, corrupt world, and over all the enemies that oppose this kingdom. Where this is, there Christ reigns. But when little of this is revealed in the Church, then Christ does not reign in complete glory. When in the rulers of the Church we note: pride, worldly splendour, luxuriousness, a worldly spirit, the love of power, a passion for predominance, the love of glory, avarice, envy, jealousy, and, proceeding from these, quarrels, arguments, temptations, impurity of life and pandering to the vices of worldly people; when the Church groans under the tyranny of impious tsars who do not respect religion: then Christ does not reign in such an evident and glorious way. On the contrary, when the pastors and teachers of the Church are humble, righteous, non-possessive, abstinent, prudent, zealous for piety and the glory of God, far from the spirit of the world and luxuriousness, under the protection of pious governments that are reverent before God, who teach the knowledge of God, piety and righteousness to the flocks entrusted to them, who lead them to salvation in accordance with the teaching and good order of the Apostles and Holy Fathers, who care about peace and the decency of the morals and customs of their flock; who destroy

temptations; who shine to their flock in the purity of morals and holiness of life; who serve as objects of fear for the impious and vicious, but as consolation for the good: then Christ reigns in glory.

“But the Kingdom of Christ will be spiritual, and not sensual, as the so-called chiliasts of antiquity imagined it, thinking that Jesus Christ would in a visible manner come down from heaven to earth in Jerusalem, and would rule whole peoples like earthly, civil tsars. For the Kingdom of Christ is spiritual (John 18.36), and His glory is spiritual; it does not come in a noticeable manner (Luke 17.20,21), so that one could see it externally, it does not consist in external civil institutions and administration, it is not united with external pomp and splendour; according to the words of the Apostle Paul (Romans 14.17), the Kingdom of God consists not in the enjoyment of food and drink, in material goods, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The glorious Kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth will consist in the fact that, after the destruction of all the enemies of Christianity – paganism and antichristianity, there will come a peaceful, calm period in which the Church, after receiving into her bosom all the Jews and Gentiles, well constructed and ruled in accordance with the teaching and good order of the Apostles and Holy Fathers, enlightened by the Evangelical light of the knowledge of the truth and holiness, and enjoying the gifts of grace, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, will flourish in piety and good works under the care of prudent, righteous pastors, and under the protection of pious governments, and will widely spread the light of Evangelical truth, piety and glory.”³²⁹

20.4. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given to them.

The Ancient of Days came, and judgement was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom... And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatest of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. Their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them. (Daniel 7.22, 27)

The Lord said that the apostles would **sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel** (Matthew 19.28). But **judgement** over the unbelievers, according to David, **shall be to all His saints** (Psalms 149.9).

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov writes: "The thrones of the saints are their dominion over the passions, over the demons themselves, over human weaknesses, over the elements, over beasts - the abundance of their spiritual gifts... They are given judgement, that is, spiritual discernment, by which they expose sin, with whatever fair appearance it may be covered, and reject it; they are given judgement, by which they judge the angels of darkness who take on

³²⁹ Bishop Peter, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, Tomsk, 1885, p. 237; in Barsov, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-240.

the form of angels, and do not allow them to deceive them. They bowed down neither to the beast, nor to his image, neither to the Antichrist, nor to his forerunners, the persecutors of Christianity, who demanded from Christians that they renounce Christ and renounce His all-holy commandments. They received the seal of the enemy of God neither on their foreheads nor on their right hands, but acquired the mind of Christ, constantly expressing it in their thoughts and actions, not sparing even their blood in order to receive the seal of faithfulness of Christ. And for that reason they reigned with Christ. For them there is no death! For them the separation of the soul from the body - we repeat the thought of Basil the Great - is not death, but a passage from sorrowful wandering on earth to eternal joy and repose."³³⁰

Another possible interpretation is that the Eighth Ecumenical Council is being referred to, insofar as at the Ecumenical Councils the holy fathers triumphed over heresies and judged heretics. For as St. Nilus the Myrrh-Gusher prophesied: "A last and Eighth Ecumenical Council [will be convened] to deal with the disputes of heretics and separate the wheat from the tares".³³¹ And St. Seraphim also prophesied the convening of a last and Eighth Council that would defeat the western heresies and prepare the world for the final contest with the Antichrist³³² - which is not to say, however, that there may not be a false eighth council of the ecumenists before the true one of the True Orthodox.³³³ At the true eighth Ecumenical Council the lives and writings of the saints will be the criterion for the judging of the heretics.

20.4. And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

St. Cyprian of Carthage writes: "He says that all live and reign with Christ, not only those who have been slain; but even whosoever, standing in firmness of faith and the fear of God, have not worshipped the image of the beast, and have not consented to his deadly and sacrilegious edicts."³³⁴

³³⁰ Bishop Ignatius, *On Signs and Wonders*, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1960 (in Russian).

³³¹ See also the anonymous prophecy that the Greek Emperor John "will chase the bad priests from the sanctuary and re-establish the divine altar".

³³² St. Seraphim, text supplied by Fr. Victor Potapov. See also *Literaturnaia Ucheba*, January-February, 1991, pp. 131-134 (in Russian).

³³³ Such a council has been planned for a long time now; and a false eighth council is hinted at by Archbishop Theophan of Poltava: "I do not know anything about the Eighth Ecumenical Council yet. I can only tell you the words of St. Theodore the Studite: 'Not every meeting of bishops is a council, only those meetings of bishops which are held in Truth.' The validity of an Ecumenical Council depends not on the number of bishops gathered at it, but on whether it formulates philosophy or teachings 'in an Orthodox way'. If it deviates from truth it is not ecumenical even if it is called ecumenical." (*Selected Letters*, Jordanville, 1976, p. 56).

³³⁴ St. Cyprian, *Treatise 11, Exhortation to Martyrdom, to Fortunatus*, 2.

These souls are clearly those whom the seer saw under the heavenly altar after the breaking of the fifth seal (6.11) - that is, the holy new martyrs of Russia. Evidently their petition is about to be answered, God's vengeance on His and their enemies is about to be accomplished. But why should they be said to live and reign with Christ for only a thousand years, and not forever? Perhaps the answer is that they only come to *live in the hearts of believers* on a large scale during the millennium, until the coming of the Antichrist consigns them to oblivion again - on earth, but not in heaven. And truly, the commemoration of the new martyrs of the 20th century started to become a mass phenomenon only towards the end of the 20th century, beginning with the canonization of the new martyrs by the Russian Church Abroad in 1981 - which led very quickly to the fall of Soviet power. The resurrection of the memory of the new martyrs, the acknowledgement by those living on earth that their struggle against Soviet power was just, and that they are living and reigning with Christ, is an essential first step to the resurrection of the Church on earth through their prayers.

"Here mention is made only of their souls, which have not yet been united with their bodies. From these words it is evident that the saints take part in the government of the Church of Christ on earth, and for that reason it is natural and right to address them with prayers, beseeching them to intercede for us before Christ, with Whom they rule." (Archbishop Averky)

20.5-6. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

The rest of the dead may refer to those who remained spiritually dead in the time of persecution, and who consequently were not counted among those for whom the Church prays that their memory may be eternal. But when the thousand years are finished, and the Last Judgement comes, they will again be brought to a kind of life - not spiritual, but bodily. For their bodies will be resurrected to **the resurrection of damnation**. **For the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves will hear His voice, and they shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation** (John 5.27-28).

"The expression: **lived not again** expresses the gloomy and painful condition after bodily death of the souls of impious sinners. It will continue **until the thousand years are finished**. As in many other passages of Sacred Scripture, this term 'until' (εως in Greek) does not signify the continuation of the action until a clearly defined time limit, but, on the contrary, the complete denial of such a limit (e.g. Matthew 1.25). In these words, therefore, we should see the denial of an eternally blessed life for the impious who have died. **Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power**. This is explained by St. Andrew of Caesarea as follows: 'From the Divine Scriptures we know that there are *two lives* and *two*

killings, that is, *deaths*: the first life, as a punishment for transgression of the commandments, is temporal and carnal, the second, as a reward for fulfilment of the Divine commandments, is the eternal life promised to the saints. In a similar fashion there are two kinds of death: the one carnal and temporary, and the other eternal, being sent in the future as a punishment of sin, that is, fiery gehenna. Consequently, the meaning of these words is this: he who has lived here on earth in Christ Jesus and in the grace-filled life given by Him, and who after the first, i.e. bodily death has appeared before Him with flaming faith in Him has nothing to fear with regard to the second death, that is, fiery gehenna." (Archbishop Averky)

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov writes: "**The first resurrection** is accomplished by means of two sacraments: baptism and repentance. Through holy baptism the soul is resurrected from the tomb of unbelief and dishonour, or from the original sin and his own sins that were committed in dishonour; while through repentance the already believing soul is resurrected from the dead brought about by his mortal sins, or by his laziness, by a pleasure-loving life after baptism..."³³⁵

Bishop Peter writes: "We may understand by the phrase **the first resurrection** the spiritual resurrection of people in Christianity, which begins with their conversion, justification and regeneration, in accordance with the words: **Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light** (Ephesians 5.14; John 5.24), and ends when the souls of the true Christians are transferred from the present life, which is for them as it were death, to true life with Jesus Christ."³³⁶ In accordance with this interpretation, the **first resurrection** - of souls, not bodies - could also mean the resurrection of the Church from her present obscurity through the prayers of the holy new martyrs, the setting of her light upon a lampstand for the whole world to see, when multitudes of nations, both Jews and Gentiles, will return to her bosom.

Thus according to New Hieromartyr Damascene of Glukhov, the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth could be "a short period of peace from the Lord (perhaps even a time when darkness will consider its work already completed), [when] the lamps [of faith] will be revealed, will be united, will light up many others which were about to go out, and will merge into a great flame of faith which, amidst the attempts to quench it, will only flare up more strongly, for many of those which have gone out and have felt the torment of the darkness and cold of tartarus will prefer rather to burn on the fire of the flame of faith than to be immersed again in darkness. *It is possible that this will be the moment which is indicated in a hidden manner under the image of 'the thousand-year reign with Christ'*."³³⁷

³³⁵ Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, *Word on Death*; in Kim, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

³³⁶ Bishop Peter of Tomsk, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, Tomsk, 1885, p. 240; in Barsov, *op. cit.*, p. 431.

³³⁷ St. Damascene of Glukhov, in E.L. *Bishop-Confessors*, San Francisco, 1971, p. 85 (in Russian). Italics mine (V.M.).

However, when the Church is resurrected and spreads to the furthest ends of the earth, some will remain stubbornly in their unbelief, refusing to partake in this feast of faith. This is indicated by St. Cosmas, who in regard to the Muslims says that one third will be killed in the war, one third will be converted to Christianity, and one third will remain in unbelief.

And the Prophet Zechariah declares concerning these stubborn unbelievers: **If any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain upon them. And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then upon them shall come the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that go not up to the feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the feast of Tabernacles (14.17-19).**

In a general sense, therefore, the **first resurrection** can be said to represent the resurrection of the Church on earth through the spiritual resurrection to faith and membership of the Church that will take place after the Third World War. It will be a resurrection of souls, not bodies, and will anticipate, by its world-wide extent and the intensity of its joy, the general resurrection of the body at the very end of the world. However, it will not be the end of the world, but will rather prepare the world for the final battle against the Antichrist and the Second Coming of Christ.

Now several of the prophecies of the saints speak of the earth becoming like paradise after the Third World War, which recall the Old Testament prophecies of how it will be after the Coming of the Messiah. For example: "The earth's treasures will be opened up and everyone will become rich; and there will be no paupers; and the earth will bring forth a hundredfold; and the weapons of war will be turned into ploughs and scythes" (St. Methodius). Again: "After the general war the lion will live with the lamb" (St. Cosmas).

The question is: are these prophecies of the New Testament saints referring to the same events as the messianic Old Testament prophecies whose images and metaphors they borrow?

Here we again come up against the problem of avoiding extremes of interpretation. The over-literal approach characteristic of the Judaizers would see in the messianic prophecies a revival of Judaism, with its sabbaths and circumcisions and animal sacrifices. However, this is definitely excluded both by St. Paul and by all of the Holy Fathers of the Church, who warn that it is precisely such false interpretations of the Scriptures that the Antichrist will use to justify his own dominion. They explain that where the Scriptures refer to Israel they are referring to the New Testament Church, and that the triumph of Israel throughout the world refers to the triumph of the Church.³³⁸

³³⁸ A useful rule of interpretation in this context has been provided by Bishop Ignatius (Brianchaninov), who writes: "The people of Israel are called both Jacob and Israel after the name of their forefather, who was named Jacob at birth and renamed Israel after he had been counted worthy of the vision of God; [but] in the spiritual sense Christians who have made

Thus when, for example, the Prophet Micah says: **He shall judge among many peoples, and shall rebuke strong nations from afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into sickles; and nation shall no more lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn to war any more** (4.3), - he is speaking of the triumph of *the Church* in the millennial period. Again, when the Prophet Zechariah says: **And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall be left of all the nations that came up against Jerusalem, shall even come up every year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles** (14.16), he is not speaking of the universal triumph of the Jews and Judaism, as the Zionists and Judaizers like to think, but of *Christ and the Church*, **the Feast of Tabernacles** being understood here as *the Christian fulfilment* of the Old Testament feast. For, as Jean Daniélou writes, "although the Jewish feast of Tabernacles has not been carried on into the Christian liturgy of today, this feast was seen by the Fathers of the Church as a figure of Christian realities."³³⁹

David Baron writes: "Tabernacles was, above all the other feasts, the harvest festival of joy and thanksgiving, in celebration not only of the full ingathering of the **labours of the field**, but also of the fruit and of the vintage, and is therefore pre-eminently styled **the Feast of Ingatherings**" (Exodus 23.15; 34.22; Deuteronomy 16.13)".³⁴⁰ It recalls the time when the Israelites, after finishing their forty-year passage through the wilderness, rested for a while in tents, or tabernacles, preparing for the final battle that would take place at the crossing of the Jordan (which means "judgement"), and anticipating the joys of the Promised Land. It was the only feast in the Jewish calendar that lasted for more than seven days. The eighth, **last and great day of the feast** (John 7.37), was the "crowning feast of all the feasts of the year," in the words of Philo the Alexandrian.³⁴¹

significant spiritual progress are called Israel" ("On the Judgements of God", in the *Collected Works* (in Russian)).

³³⁹ Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966, p. 333. Thus St. Methodius of Olympus writes: "Only those who have celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles will enter into the holy land. Leaving their tabernacles, they hasten to arrive in the Temple and the City of God, that is to say, to a joy more great and more heavenly, as it took place among the Jews in the figures of these things. In the same way, indeed, as, having come out of the borders of Egypt, they, by journeying, came to tabernacles and, from there, having advanced still further, they reached the Promised land, so is it with us. I also, having started on the journey, I come out of the Egypt of this life, I come first to the Resurrection, to the true Scenopegia [feast of Tabernacles]. There, having built my beautiful tent on the first day of the feast, that of the judgement, I celebrate the feast with Christ during the millenium of rest, called the seven days, the true Sabbaths. Then, following Jesus Who has crossed the heavens, I start on my journey again, as they, after the rest of the Feast of Tabernacles, journeyed toward the land of promise, the heavens, not waiting any longer in tabernacles, that is to say, my tabernacle not remaining any longer the same, but, after the millenium, having passed from a corruptible human form to an angelic grandeur and beauty. Then, going out from the place of tabernacles, having celebrated the feast of the Resurrection, we shall go towards better things, ascending to the house that is above the heavens" (*The Banquet*, IX, 5:120, in Daniélou, *Jewish Christianity*, p. 337).

³⁴⁰ Baron, *Zechariah*, pp. 521-522.

³⁴¹ Baron, *Zechariah*, p. 527.

In the same way, according to the present interpretation, the New Testament Church, after passing through the horrors of the Soviet yoke and in general the whole period of persecution at the hands of the western heretics since 1054, will be delivered from its enemies for a short time (about fifty years, according to the anonymous Athonite prophet of 1053). This will be the time of "ingathering", when the fullness both of the Gentiles and of the penitent Jews, will enter the Church. The people of God will be granted this period of rest and joy, expressed in the Christian fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles, in preparation for the final battle against the Antichrist and in anticipation of the more complete victory that will take place at the Second Coming of Christ and the General Resurrection.

In the Jewish calendar, the Feast of Tabernacles is immediately preceded by the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, which is devoted to profound repentance for sin. Thus the opening of the eyes of faith must be preceded by profound repentance. According to the Prophet Zachariah this same sequence will take place in the history of Israel. First the Lord says: **I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and compassion; and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced** [this is the Hebrew quoted in John 19.37; the Greek is: **because they have mocked Me**], **and they shall make lamentation for Him, as for a beloved Friend, and they shall grieve intensely, as for a First-Born Son** (12.10). Then the Lord will appear to them, and **His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives** (14.4). And then **everyone that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, there will be no rain upon them. And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then upon them shall come the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles** (14.16-18).

The Lord may have been referring to this joyful event when He said to the impenitent Jews: **Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see Me again until you say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord** (Matthew 23.38-29). For **Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord** is the verse sung at the climax of the Feast of Tabernacles. It is as if the Lord were saying: "You will not see Me with the eyes of faith until you are converted and participate with the whole of the New Testament Church in the Christian fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles."

Thus the Feast of Tabernacles celebrates a kind of "resurrection before the Resurrection", a period of rest for the Church before her last battle with the Antichrist, her crossing the river of the Last Judgement, and her ascent to the Heavenly Jerusalem, where she puts on the tabernacle of the Resurrection Body.

Daniélou points out that the liturgy of the feast of Tabernacles is similar to the liturgy of Palm Sunday [notably in the use of the verse, **Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord**], which is a similar "resurrection before the Resurrection" and - to the liturgical rites described in the Apocalypse. "The whole liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles serves St. John in the Apocalypse to describe the procession of the elect around the heavenly altar. It is, in fact, the liturgy of this Feast which we are to recognize in the passage of the Apocalypse (7.9-17) describing the **great crowd** which stands before the throne of the Lamb. Many details are connected with the Feast: the palm-branches ('phoiniches') in their hands, the white robes, which recall the garments of Christ at the Transfiguration (7.9), the tabernacle in which the Lord dwells in the midst of the elect ('scenosei') (7.15), the springs of living water where they quench their thirst (7.17). We have here, on the second level of eschatology, the projection of the first fulfillment which was, on the level of the Gospel, the episode of Palm Sunday..."³⁴²

The liturgical links between the Feast of Tabernacles and Palm Sunday reflect a profound prophetic parallelism; for as on Palm Sunday, so on the future Feast of the Tabernacles, the Jews acclaim Christ as the Messiah and their true king - temporarily. But just as Palm Sunday was followed by Great Friday and the Crucifixion of Christ, when the Jews who had hailed Christ five days before called for His death, saying "Crucify Him!", so the same race of the Jews, after turning to Christ after the World War and joining the Church in fulfillment of the prophecies (Romans 11), and after participating with the Christian Gentiles in the Christian Feast of Tabernacles, will turn against Him again to worship the Antichrist, in fulfillment of many other prophecies.

For it is of this, the Jewish worship of the Antichrist at the end of time, that the Lord says: **I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive** (John 5.43).

While recognizing that many of the Old Testament prophecies about Israel are actually talking about the Church, it is impossible to allegorize these prophecies to such an extent that *all* references to the race of the Jews and to the physical land of Israel are excluded. For the triumph of the Church in the millennial period will be at the same time *the return of the Jews to the Church*, as was prophesied by St. Paul in Romans 9 to 11, and by St. John in the Apocalypse, as we have seen (e.g. 3.9, 7.4-8). Therefore the apparent confusion of the categories of the Old and New Testament Churches may be deliberate, as pointing, not to the return of the Christians to the worship of the Old Testament, but to the return of the Jews to the Church, **the turning again of the heart of the father to the son** (Malachi 4.5).³⁴³

³⁴² Daniélou, *Jewish Christianity*, p. 342.

³⁴³ "It is curious that St. Irenaeus of Lyons, the disciple of Papias, confirms his opinion on the earthly Kingdom of the saints by witnesses from the prophets of the Old Testament, and refers to Isaiah 26.19, 30.25, 58.14; Jeremiah 23.7-8, 28.25-26" (Kim, *op. cit.*, p. 130).

One of the clearest of these prophecies is in Ezekiel, where, after describing how the Jews will spend seven months clearing up after the destruction of Gog and Magog, the prophet continues: **All the nations shall know that the house of Israel was led captive because of their sins, because they rebelled against Me, and I turned My face from them, and delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions did I deal with them, and I turned My face from them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Now will I turn back captivity in Jacob, and will have mercy on the house of Israel, and will be jealous for the sake of My holy name (39.23-25).**

For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you [baptism], and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses.. And you shall be My people, and I will be your God (Ezekiel 36.24-25,28).

Again, in Jeremiah we read: **Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days, says the Lord, that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord'. It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore. At that time Jerusalem shall be called the Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. Nor more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers (3.16-18).**

Again, in Zephaniah we read: **From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My suppliants, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring Me offering. On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against Me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain. For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord, those who are left in Israel... I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors, and I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gathered you together; yea, I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord. (3.10-13,18-20).**

Again, the Lord says through the Prophet Zechariah: **I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and compassion; and they shall look on Me Whom they pierced (i.e. the Crucified Christ), and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns over a first-born (12.10).** Thus pierced with a true spirit of repentance, "Jacob", the Jews, will return to "Israel", the Church.

And so all Israel (i.e. Christian Jews and Gentiles together) will be saved; as it is written: The deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob (Romans 11.26; Isaiah 59.20).³⁴⁴

The Apostle Paul calls the conversion of the Jews to Christ **life from the dead** (Romans 11.15). Therefore it is entirely fitting that this event, combined with the simultaneous harvest of **the fullness of the Gentiles** (Romans 11.25), should be called **the first resurrection** in the Apocalypse.

“Then,” writes St. Agathangelus, “honey and milk will flow in everything; the sea storms will cease, and for fully fifty years shall peace reign; truth shall triumph, and the sky shall rejoice in true glory; the Orthodox Faith shall be uplifted and shall spring from East to West in order to be praised and blessed; the barbarians shall be overcome with fright and, wholly trembling, shall flee headlong speedily, abandoning the world’s metropolis; then God shall be glorified, and man shall see the works of His omnipotence. Let it be so, and it shall be so.”

Or, as St. Cosmas of Aitolia writes: “Blessed is he that shall live after the general war. He will eat with spoons of silver.”³⁴⁵

20.7-8. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, and the land of Magog, Rhos, prince of Mesoch and Thobel, and prophesy against him, and say to him, Thus saith the Lord God: I am against thee Rhos, prince of Mesoch and Thobel... Wilt thou not arise in that day, when My people Israel are dwelling securely, and come out from thy place from the farthest north, and many nations with thee? all of them mounted on

³⁴⁴ Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) interprets this passage to mean that all of the Jews will be saved: “Not of a single people - not of the Russians, or of the Greeks - has it been said that all of their descendants will be saved in due time, as this is said of the Jews” (“Sermon on the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing women”, 1903; *Living Orthodoxy*, N 83, vol. XIV, no. 5, September-October, 1992, p. 37). But this is surely a mistake. We know that the Antichrist, for one, will be a Jew and will *not* be saved.

³⁴⁵ Cf. Professor Pangiotis Trembelas: “Then the Church will be able to celebrate peace on earth as an annunciatory dawn of the eternal Day without evening of the future Kingdom and will be able to see the ideal of her combats and efforts realized. At that moment the devil will have been truly bound, for if evil has not been completely annihilated, it will nevertheless be reduced to impotence. There will no longer exist a human will strong enough to oppose Christianity and the Christian spirit will predominate everywhere. States and institutions will be inspired by it; the sciences and arts, in the service of Christian thought, will find their true ideal and will serve glorified humanity. There will be a religious resurrection, the tombs of ecclesiastical history will be opened, the whole past will be revealed to live again in a memory always present and alive...” (*Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church*, Chevetogne, 1961, vol. III, pp. 474-477 (in French)).

horses, a great gathering, and a large force? And thou shalt come up upon My people Israel as a cloud shall cover the land; it shall come to pass in the last days (Ezekiel 38.1-3, 14-6).

Josephus says that Magog (or Gog) was the ancestor of the Scythians, who also originally inhabited the Black Sea area.³⁴⁶ Saints Ephraim the Syrian³⁴⁷, John Chrysostom³⁴⁸ and Theodoretus³⁴⁹ understand by **Gog and Magog** the peoples who oppressed the Jews soon after their return from exile in Babylon, or Antiochus Epiphanes and his armies. And yet it is difficult to see how this prophecy could have been fulfilled already.

"Some think," writes St. Andrew of Caesarea, "that **Gog and Magog** are the distant peoples of the Scythians, or, as we call them, the Huns, the most warlike and numerous of all the peoples of the earth. Only by the Divine right hand are they held back from taking control of the whole earth until the liberation of the devil. Others, translating from the Hebrew, say that 'Gog' signifies 'meeting' or 'assembly', and 'Magog' - 'raised' or 'exaltation'. One must know that Ezekiel prophesied concerning these peoples, that **they shall come in the last days with great power and fall on the land of Israel; and their weapons, because of their great number, will burn for seven years.**

"Some interpreters of this word of the prophet have referred [this event] to the battle of the Assyrians under Sennacherib with Hezekiah. But this event took place many years before the prophecy of Ezekiel. Others refer them to the defeat of the peoples who attacked the inhabitants of Jerusalem when they, after the Babylonian captivity, wanted to repair and strengthen the walls of the city in accordance with the command, first of the Persian Cyrus, and then of Darius. They also refer them to the armies of Antiochus, which were defeated by the Maccabees. It is clear, however, that their advent above all refers to the last times. It is possible to assert this, first, because nowhere in the sacred books is there mention of wars of the Jews with the Scythians, only of wars with neighbouring peoples who envied their modern enrichment; secondly, because it is written concerning Gog that he will be prepared from ancient times and will come in the last times; and thirdly, because in this revelation foretelling the future (Revelation ch. 20) it is said that Gog and Magog will come at the end of the age."

St. Jerome writes: "The word **Magog** is used for the first time in the Book of Genesis (10.2). It is one of the sons of Japheth. In the prophecy of Ezekiel there is mention of **Gog and Magog**; from there these names have been transferred to the Apocalypse with the same meanings with which they were understood by Ezekiel, but with a different denotation. **Gog** in Ezekiel is represented as a glorious and terrible conqueror who invades the land of the people of Israel

³⁴⁶ Josephus, *On Antiquities*, VI, 1. St. Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century, had the same interpretations (see Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII, 41).

³⁴⁷ St. Ephraim, volume V in the Russian edition of his works, p. 58.

³⁴⁸ St. Chrysostom, volume V in the Russian edition of his works, p. 688.

³⁴⁹ Kim, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

with a large army (38.15-16)... God was a weapon of the wrath of God against Israel, but then because of his cruelty and impiety was also made an object of revenge of the wrath of God. The word **Magog** meant either the land, or the people, commanded by **Gog**... From the Apocalypse it is evident that prophecies sometimes referred, in the same words, also to the judgement of God on the impiety of the last times in the existence of the world, the time of the coming, kingdom and dominion of the last Antichrist. **Gog** has always been understood to refer to a savage and warlike ruler commanding a numerous army of warriors of various races who tramples on the laws of God, a bloodthirsty evildoer, an enemy of God, the faith and the Church and the worship of God. **Gog** is the Antichrist; **Magog** - his army. **Gog** means one who gathers, and **Magog** - a gathering of the peoples."³⁵⁰

St. Jerome interprets the words **Rhos**, **Mosoch** and **Thobel** to mean "head", "insanity" and "universal", respectively.³⁵¹ The fact that the **Rhos** of Ezekiel's prophecy (Ρως) is spelt, in Greek, exactly the same as the word for "Russia", has naturally led many people to identify **Gog and Magog** with Russia and its allies - Soviet Russia (and its neo-Soviet successor) being indeed "the head of universal insanity". This supposition is strengthened by the fact that **Gog and Magog** are said to come **from the extreme north** and **in the last times**.³⁵²

There are two important differences between the prophecy of Ezekiel and the present prophecy about Gog and Magog. The first is that whereas Ezekiel's Gog and Magog come **from the extreme north** (38.6; cf. 38.15, 39.2; Joel 2.20), John's come from **the four quarters of the earth**. The second is that whereas the destruction of Ezekiel's Gog and Magog is followed by several more years of terrestrial life, that of John is followed by the Last Judgement.

The reason for this difference is that while Ezekiel's vision is of the *collective* Antichrist (neo-Soviet Russia, located directly to the north of Jerusalem), John's is of the *personal* Antichrist. Between the destruction of the collective Antichrist and the rise of the personal Antichrist comes *the millenium*, during which True Christianity will spread to the four quarters of the earth. Hence the transition from the local to the universal: whereas in 1917, the beginning of the reign of the collective Antichrist, True Christianity was mainly concentrated in the Russian Empire and the Balkans, before the reign of the personal Antichrist it will have spread everywhere, eliciting a universal persecution of it by the dark forces.

³⁵⁰ St. Jerome, *Interpretation of the Apocalypse*, 20.7.

³⁵¹ St. Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel*, 454; P.L. XXV.

³⁵² See also Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1976, pp. 247-248. For more references on the identification of these names, see Fomin, S. & Fomina, T. *Russia before the Second Coming*, Sergiev Posad, 1998, third edition, volume II, pp. 475-506 (in Russian). However, other writers have rejected the identification of Ezekiel's **Gog and Magog** with Russia. See Ant. Florovsky, "The Prince Ros' in the Prophet Ezekiel", in Fomin, S. & Fomina, T. op. cit., pp. 682-691.

But if Ezekiel's **Gog and Magog** refer to the forces of the *collective* Antichrist *before* the millennium, and St. John's **Gog and Magog** refer to the forces of the *personal* Antichrist *after* the millennium, why are both sets of forces called by the same name of **Gog and Magog**? Evidently because *spiritually speaking, in their antichristian aims and spirit*, they are identical.

20.9-10. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints above, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Let the wicked be cut off, that he behold not the glory of the Lord (Isaiah 26.10).

20.11. And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from Whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.

I beheld until the thrones were set, and the Ancient of days sat; and His raiment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was as pure wool; his throne was a flame of fire, and his wheels burning fire. A stream of fire rushed forth before Him: thousand thousands ministered to Him, and myriad myriads attended upon Him: the judgement sat, and the books were opened (Daniel 7.9-10).

"This is a picture of the universal judgement of God on the human race. The whiteness of the throne on which the supreme Judge sits signifies the holiness and righteousness of His judgement." (Archbishop Averky)

The fleeing away of the heavens and the earth is explained by the Apostle Peter: **The Day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3.10).** For, as David says: **In the beginning, O Lord, Thou didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou abidest; and all like a garment shall grow old, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them, and they shall be changed (Psalms 101: 25-26; Hebrews 1.10-12).**

20.12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

In Daniel we read: **And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame**

and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever (12.1-3).

"The opened books represent the acts and conscience of each person. One of them is the book of life in which are written the names of the saints." (St. Andrew of Caesarea)

"The opened books symbolically signify the omniscience of God, to Whom all the works of men are known. The book of life is only one, as a sign of the small quantity of the elect of God who are to be heirs of salvation." (Archbishop Averky)

20.13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.

St. Methodius of Patara writes: "Does this not indicate the return of the particles (of the dead bodies) by the elements, for the restoration of each of them?"³⁵³

"The meaning of this is that *everyone* without exception will be resurrected and stand before the Judgement of God." (Archbishop Averky)

20.14-15. And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

"This is said with the meaning that those who are glorified and saved will no longer fear either death or hades: for them death and hades will cease to exist forever. By the **lake of fire** and **second death** are to be understood the eternal condemnation of sinners, whose names did not appear in the Lord's book of life." (Archbishop Averky)

"The **second death** is... the cutting off from God of a sinful soul which lives in carnal desires, of which the Lord says: **Let the dead bury the dead** (Matthew 8.22; Luke 9.60)." (Patriarch Anthimus) For, as St. John Chrysostom says, "many even of those who seem to live are no better than dead men, living as they do in wickedness."³⁵⁴

St. Ephraim writes: "We know from the Gospel that there are various places of torment. For it has been revealed to us that there is **exterior darkness** (Matthew 8.12), and so it follows that there is also **interior darkness**. The fire of **gehenna** (Matthew 5.29) is another place, the abode of **weeping and gnashing of teeth** (Matthew 25.30). Another place speaks of **the worm that**

³⁵³ St. Methodius of Patara, *on the Resurrection*; in Kim, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

³⁵⁴ St. Chrysostom, *Homily 27 on Matthew*, 7.

dieth not (Mark 9.43). We read in another place of **the lake of fire** (Rev. 19.15). The lower world of **destruction** and perdition are written of in precise terms (Matthew 7.13; I Timothy 6.9). The depths of the earth is another place. The hell where sinners are tormented, and **the depths of hell**, a more fearful place. The wretched souls of the damned are distributed throughout these places of punishment, each one according to the nature of his sins; fearfully or less fearfully, as it is written: **Each one is fast bound by the ropes of his own sins** (Proverbs 5.22); and this is what is meant by the servant who is beaten with **many stripes** or **with few stripes** (Luke 12.47,48). For just as there are differences of sin so also are there differences in their punishment."³⁵⁵

St. Gregory Palamas writes: "Although in the future restoration, when the bodies of the righteous will be raised, the bodies of the lawless and sinners will also be raised, they will be raised only so as to be subjected to **the second death**: to eternal torment, **the unsleeping worm** (Mark 9.48), **the gnashing of teeth** (Matthew 8.12), **the outer** and impenetrable **darkness** (Matthew 8.12), to dark and inextinguishable **gehenna** (Matthew 5.22). The prophet says: **The lawless and sinners shall be burnt up together, and there shall be none to quench it** (Isaiah 1.31; cf. Jeremiah. 4.4). For this is **the second death**, as John teaches us in his Revelation."³⁵⁶

"For at that time the trumpet shall sound (I Thessalonians 4.16)," writes St. Hippolytus, "and awake those that sleep from the lowest parts of the earth, righteous and sinners alike. And every kindred, and tongue, and nation, and tribe shall be raised in the twinkling of an eye (I Corinthians 15.52); and they shall stand before the face of the earth, waiting for the Coming of the righteous and terrible Judge, in fear and trembling unutterable. For the river of fire shall come forth in fury like an angry sea, and shall burn up mountains and hills, and shall make the sea vanish, and shall dissolve the atmosphere with its heat like wax (II Peter 3.12). The stars of heaven shall fall (Matthew 24.29), the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood (Acts 2.20). The heaven shall be rolled together like a scroll (Rev. 6.19): the whole earth shall be burnt up by reason of the deeds done in it, which men did corruptly, in fornications, in adulteries, and in lies and uncleanness, and in idolatries, and in murders, and in battles. For there shall be **a new heaven and a new earth**."³⁵⁷

October 13/26, 2015.

Iveron Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God.

³⁵⁵ St. Ephraim, *Sermon* 72; translated by M.F. Toal, *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, London: Longmans, 1959, vol. 3, p. 302.

³⁵⁶ St. Gregory Palamas, *To the Nun Xenia*, P.G. 150.1043-1088.

³⁵⁷ St. Hippolytus, *Discourse on the End of the World, and on Antichrist, and on the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, 37.

22. KING ALFRED THE GREAT, THE ENGLISH DAVID

The mid-ninth century was a very low point in the history of the Western Orthodox Church. The Carolingian empire was disintegrating into feudalism; Vikings and Saracens were sacking Christian monasteries and towns; the material, cultural and spiritual level of the people was deteriorating rapidly. However, by the end of the century one nation in the West was recovering and even building the foundations of a truly Orthodox kingdom that was to survive and flourish until its violent overthrow in 1066: England. This was the achievement largely of one man and his ecclesiastical advisors: King Alfred the Great. Let us look at the main stages of his extraordinary life.

The Roman Consul

Alfred was born in 849, the fifth son of King Aethelwulf of Wessex, one of the traditional "heptarchy", or seven kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxons. Wessex comprised most of southern England south of the Thames (but not including London), and its capital was the old Roman town of Winchester. A very pious man, King Aethelwulf gave one tenth of his dominions to the Church and made several pilgrimages to Rome.

On one of them, in the year 853, he took his youngest son Alfred, together with Alfred's tutor, St. Swithun, Bishop of Winchester. "At this time," writes Alfred's earliest biographer, his friend the Welsh Bishop Asser, "the lord Pope Leo [IV] was ruling the apostolic see. He anointed the child Alfred as king, ordaining him properly, received him as an adoptive son and confirmed him." This extraordinary event could be dismissed as fiction - and has been so dismissed by many historians - if it were not confirmed by a letter written in the same year by the Pope himself to King Aethelwulf: "We have now graciously received your son Alfred, whom you were anxious to send at this time to the threshold of the Holy Apostles, and we have decorated him, as a spiritual son, with the dignity of the belt and vestments of the consulate, as is customary with Roman consuls, because he gave himself into our hands."

Roman consul? This was surely an archaism - although in 754 Pope Stephen IV had given the title of patricius to Pippin, King of the Franks, as a sign that the Franks, and not the Byzantines, were now his secular protectors. Adoption as his spiritual son and godson? It was possible. Anointing to the kingdom? This was unusual but a certain precedent existed for it in that both Charlemagne and King Offa of Mercia had had their sons associated with themselves in the kingship by Pope Hadrian. But the honour accorded to Alfred seems to have been greater than that - and more surprising in that Alfred had four older brothers who would be expected to ascend the throne before him!

The only explanation of the Pope's extraordinary action, according to the twelfth-century writer Aelred of Rievaulx, was that Pope Leo was a prophet and foresaw the future greatness of Alfred. Certainly, if the pope foresaw Alfred's greatness, it made sense for him to tie his destiny as close as possible with the city

of Rome and the papacy. For that same prophetic gift would have told him that the Carolingian empire with which the papacy was officially linked would soon collapse, and so the future of Roman Christian civilization depended on reviving the already close links between the papacy and “the land of the angels”, as Pope Gregory I had called England.

The Wild Boar

On his return from a second pilgrimage to Rome with Alfred, in 856, King Aethelwulf found that his eldest son, Aethelbald, had seized the kingdom and divided it between himself and his brother Aethelbert. However, in 860 Aethelbald died, and Aethelbert reunited the kingdom under his single rule. But in the same year the Vikings sacked Winchester and St. Swithun, the protector of the kingdom and Alfred’s tutor, died. In 865 Aethelbert also died, and Aethelred came to the throne. He had to face a renewed threat from the Vikings, who in 866 invaded the northern kingdom of Northumbria, which was divided by civil war between two English kings. The Danes conquered the Northumbrian capital of York, killed both kings in a particularly cruel manner and then installed a puppet-king of English nationality in their place. In 869, supplemented by reinforcements from overseas, the Danes assembled their greatest army yet and invaded East Anglia, conquering it after a bitter and bloody struggle against the Holy Martyr-King Edmund.

The next year the Vikings crossed the Thames and defeated King Aethelred and his brother Prince Alfred at Reading. However, on January 8, 871 the two brothers met the Vikings at Ashdown and won a famous victory – the first major setback for the Vikings in England. The manner of the victory was significant. Prince Alfred and his men took up position blocking the Viking advance. However, King Aethelred would not join him at first because he was attending the Divine Liturgy in his tent, and said that he would not fight until the liturgy was completed. Alfred had no choice but to begin the battle without his brother and when he was not yet in position. He charged *uphill* at the pagans “like a wild boar”. They retreated, and when King Aethelred joined his brother the retreat turned into a rout. The Vikings lost thousands of men, and were driven all the way back to their camp at Reading.

However, on March 22 another battle took place at Meretun at which King Aethelred was severely wounded. On St. George’s day, April 23, 871, he died, and at the tender age of twenty-one, after the deaths of all four of his brothers, Alfred was king of Wessex. As the holy pope had foreseen, he was now in the position of a Roman consul, commanding the last significant army standing in the way of the complete triumph of the pagan Vikings over Christian England.

But things did not go well at first. In his first battle as king Alfred lost to the Vikings at Wilton. Four years of peace ensued, during which the Vikings consolidated their control over northern and central England, placing puppet kings in Northumbria and Mercia (Central England). In 874, King Burhred of Mercia fled to Rome with his wife, Alfred’s sister, and died there as a monk.

Sometimes King Alfred would visit his spiritual father, St. Neot, asking for his

blessing. There is some evidence that the king was in conflict with Archbishop Aethelred of Canterbury at this time - there exists a letter dated to 877 from the archbishop to Pope John VIII complaining about the king. It may be in this connection that St. Neot severely criticised the king for his proud harshness, bringing before him the humility of David as an example, and pointing out that Saul, who had been placed at the head of the tribes of Israel when he was small in his own eyes, was later condemned for his pride. Then he prophesied that the barbarians would invade the land and triumph by God's permission, and he would be the only one to escape, wandering as a fugitive over the land. "O King," he said, "you will suffer much in this life; no man can say how much you will suffer. But now, beloved child, hear me if you are willing, and turn your heart to my counsel. Forsake your wickedness; redeem your sins by almsgiving, and wipe them out through tears." And he urged him, when he would see his words fulfilled, not to despair, but to act like a man and strengthen his heart. For through his intercessions he had obtained from God that Alfred would again be restored to his former prosperity, so long as he ceased from doing evil and repented of his sins. And he further urged him to send gifts to the Pope, beseeching him to give freedom to the English School in Rome. This good deed would help him in his troubles. Alfred then sent the Pope as he had been advised, and obtained his request, together with several holy relics and a portion of the True Cross.

In 876, the Vikings resumed their offensive. Their new leader Guthrum rode from Cambridge to Wareham, deep inside Alfred's kingdom. A Viking fleet was very near, and the combination of the army in Wareham and the fleet at sea presented a mortal threat to King Alfred. By God's Providence the fleet was completely destroyed in a storm. However, being unable to defeat the land army under Guthrum, Alfred was forced to make peace with him. According to the agreement, Guthrum was supposed to leave Wessex, but instead, under cover of night, he established himself within the Roman walls of the city of Exeter. Alfred pursued him, and the two sides again made peace, exchanging hostages. On July 31 St. Neot died, and almost immediately, in August, Guthrum retreated north of the Thames into Viking-dominated territory at Gloucester. The threat had passed - for the time being...

[The Guerilla King](#)

King Alfred celebrated Christmas, 877 at his royal villa at Chippenham in Wiltshire. On Twelfth Night, January 6, traditionally the climax of the festivities, Guthrum made a sudden surprise attack on Alfred and forced him to flee to the west. After Pascha (March 23), Alfred and a few men arrived at a small island surrounded by marshes called Athelney, near Glastonbury, the place where St. Joseph of Arimathaea had first preached the Gospel in apostolic times. The island was 9,500 square metres in size - the full extent of Orthodox England controlled by the king at this, the lowest point in English Orthodox history.

Although the main sources for Alfred's reign - Bishop Asser's *Life* and *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* - make no direct mention of this, there is strong evidence that Alfred was betrayed - perhaps by his nephew Aethelwold, who joined the

Danes after his death, more probably by the ealdorman (provincial governor) of Wiltshire, Wulfhere. Guthrum and the English traitors probably planned either to kill Alfred or force him to flee abroad, making way for an English puppet-king for Wessex on the model of the puppet-kings already installed in Northumbria and Mercia. But Alfred refused to flee the country as his brother-in-law King Burhred of Mercia had done – and this decision probably saved English Orthodox civilization. For as long as Alfred was alive no puppet-king could be installed in Wessex and the Vikings' position remained precarious.

However, his situation was still desperate. Alfred, writes Bishop Asser, “had nothing to live on except what he could forage by frequent raids, either secretly or even openly, from the Vikings as well as from the Christians who had submitted to the Vikings' authority.” One day, the king was asked for alms by a poor beggar. He gave him some of the little he possessed. That night, the beggar appeared to him in a dream and revealed that he was the famous St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne (the greatest of the English saints, whose incorrupt relics were at that moment being carried by monks around the North of England to escape the marauding Vikings). He then told the king that God would now have mercy on England after the great suffering she had undergone because of her sins, and that Alfred himself would regain his kingdom. As a sign of the truth of his words, the saint said, the next morning Alfred's fishermen would bring in an enormous catch of fish, which would be the more miraculous because of the extreme coldness of the weather. When Alfred awoke, he discovered that his mother had had exactly the same vision; and at the same time his men came in to announce that they had made an enormous catch of fish. Soon the rest of the vision was fulfilled...

Encouraged by this, the king decided on some daring reconnaissance work. With one faithful follower, he gained admittance to the Danish camp as a singing actor, and there was able to find out everything he needed to know before returning to Athelney. Then, as winter turned into spring, Alfred was joined by Ealdorman Aethelnoth of Somerset and a small force.

It was in this period that St. Neot appeared to the king in his misery one night, and told him that he would triumph over the enemy in the seventh week after Pascha, and that the Danish King Guthrum and his nobles would be baptized. And so, in the seventh week after Pascha Alfred rode to a secret meeting place called Egbert's stone, and there, writes Bishop Asser, “all the inhabitants of Somerset and Wiltshire and all the inhabitants of Hampshire – those who had not sailed overseas for fear of the Vikings – joined up with him. When they saw the king, ... they were filled with immense joy.” Then, on the night before the battle of Edington, in the village of Iley, St. Neot again appeared to the king. He looked like an angel, his hair white as snow, his garments glistening and fragrant. “Arise quickly,” he said, “and prepare for victory. When you came here, I was with you, I helped you. So now you and your men go out to battle tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, Who gives victory to kings. And I will go before you to the battle, and your enemies shall fall by your arm before my eyes, and you will smite them with the edge of the sword.”

The next morning, during the battle, an invisible hand seized Alfred's standard and waved the English on. The Danes were so overwhelmed that they agreed to leave Wessex forever, while Guthrum and thirty of his leading men agreed to be baptized. This time the Danes kept their promises, Alfred received his greatest enemy from the baptismal font, and for twelve days the Danes remained with Alfred and enjoyed his very generous hospitality. Guthrum and his men then moved to East Anglia and settled there permanently.

In 885 a Viking fleet appeared on the Thames. Alfred saw this as a violation of his agreement with Guthrum and seized London from the Vikings. Then, according to Asser. And "all the Angles and Saxons – those who had formerly been scattered everywhere and were not in captivity with the Vikings – turned willingly to Alfred and submitted to his lordship." Seizing the opportunity, Alfred now drew up a permanent treaty with King Guthrum. The English and Danish kings divided England between them: most of the north and east became the "Danelaw", the administration of the Danes, while the English kept the south and the west (except Cornwall, which was a Celtic kingdom). Soon the Danish settlers in England were becoming Orthodox Christians in large numbers. Thus in East Anglia, early in the tenth century, the Christianized Danes were issuing coins commemorating the Martyr-King Edmund, whom they themselves had killed only a few years before! Again, by the middle of the tenth century the son of a warrior in the Great Army, St. Odo, had become archbishop of Canterbury, while later in the century another Dane, Osketyl, became archbishop of York. The foundation of this remarkable reconciliation of the two warring races in Christ was laid by the courage, generosity and statesmanship of King Alfred...

[The All-English Kingdom](#)

King Alfred was even greater in peace than he was in war. Determined that he should never again be caught out and out-manoeuvred by the rapid strikes of the Danes, he made three important innovations in the sphere of military organization that proved to be very important when war with the Vikings resumed in the 890s. Although the Vikings were not decisively defeated then, they gave up their attempts to conquer England for another one hundred years.

Alfred's first innovation was the building of a fleet in order to meet and destroy the marauding pagans before they ever set foot on English soil. Alfred even ordered the construction of a long-ship according to his own design. This was the first permanent fleet that any British ruler had constructed since the fourth-century Romans, who had built a fleet to protect the island against – the pagan Anglo-Saxons.

Secondly, he went part of the way to creating a standing army, "dividing his army in two, so that always half its men were at home, half out on service, except for those men who were to garrison the burhs".

The burhs, or new towns, were Alfred's third and most original innovation: he constructed, or reconstructed, thirty of them at equal intervals throughout Wessex

so that no Englishman working in the fields was more than twenty miles from a burh, to which he could flee in time of Viking invasion. The burhs were laid out in rectilinear street plans designed to facilitate the movement of soldiers. They were protected by massive earthworks, and Alfred appointed 27,000 soldiers to man their walls. The local landowners were required to provide four men to man each "pole" of wall (5.5 metres). The towns were also designed as centres of trade, so the predominantly rural civilization of Anglo-Saxon England was soon acquiring an urban "middle class".

The only real city in England before this had been London, which was now relocated within the walls of the old Roman town by Alfred and extensively rebuilt. This Romanizing tendency was also revealed in the coins he minted in London, which, as Hindley points out, "show 'design elements deliberately and carefully copied' from Roman models". In his London coins Alfred calls himself "king of the English" rather than "king of Wessex"; and, sensitive to the Londoners' feelings, he appointed a Mercian, not a Wessex man, as ealdorman of the city and gave him his daughter in marriage.

Alfred's policy towards London was a part of his wider policy of abolishing the regional differences and rivalries among the Anglo-Saxons and creating a genuinely all-English kingdom. Conscious that the divisions among the Anglo-Saxons had been at least partly to blame for their near-conquest by the Vikings, he deliberately tried to promote Englishmen from north of the Thames, especially in Church appointments. He was also very generous towards the Celts, who had only recently returned from a century-long schism from the Orthodox Church because of their hatred of the English. Thus the Celtic Bishop Asser moved to England as Bishop of Sherborne and became his main counsellor and biographer, and by the end of his reign all the South Welsh kingdoms had submitted freely to his rule.

This policy of national reconciliation and unification was continued by Alfred's son, Edward the Elder, who annexed Danish (Eastern) Mercia, and his grandson, Athelstan, who absorbed Cornwall, North Wales and much of Northern England. These gains were not always made without war, but the battles were against Celts and Vikings, not against other Englishmen. Thus in 937, at the battle of Brunanburgh in north-west England - "the great, lamentable and horrible battle", as *The Annals of Ulster* described it - King Athelstan completely routed a formidable coalition between Olaf, the Viking king of Dublin, and Constantine, the king of the Scots, after which he appropriated to himself the Byzantine titles of basileus and curagulus of the whole of Britain...

The Lover of Wisdom

An important aspect of Alfred's unification policy was his codification of law. His *Lawbook* of 893 acknowledges his debt to the law-codes of earlier kings of Wessex, Kent and Mercia, and he seems to have intended it to cover, not only Wessex, but also Kent and English (Western) Mercia. Alfred himself travelled round the kingdom checking on the activities of his judges, and if he discovered

that they had committed some injustice he imposed on them an original penance – further education. Bishop Asser recounts his words: “I am astonished at this arrogance of yours, since through God’s authority and my own you have enjoyed the office and status of wise men, yet you have neglected the study and application of wisdom. For that reason I command you either to relinquish immediately the offices of worldly power that you possess, or else to apply yourselves much more attentively to the pursuit of wisdom.’ Having heard these words, the ealdormen and reeves were terrified and chastened as if by the greatest of punishments, and they strove with every effort to apply themselves to learning what is just...”

Alfred’s attitude to wisdom was both mystical and intensely practical. The most famous relic of his reign, the Alfred Jewel, portrays a figure in cloisonné enamel that has been interpreted to represent the Wisdom of God. Again, when Alfred translated Boethius’ *The Consolation of Philosophy*, he recast the work as a dialogue between the inquirer’s mind and Wisdom personified. And he added passages of his own composition which revealed both his devotion to wisdom as the key virtue, and his own conception of kingship. For example: “Look, Wisdom, you know that desire for and possession of earthly power never pleased me overmuch, and that I did not unduly desire this earthly rule, but that nevertheless I wished for tools and resources for the task that I was commanded to accomplish, which was that I should virtuously and worthily guide and direct the authority which was entrusted to me. You know of course that no one can make known any skill, nor direct and guide any authority, without tools and resources; a man cannot work on any enterprise without resources. In the case of the king, the resources and tools with which to rule are that he have his land fully manned: he must have praying men, fighting men and working men. You know also that without these tools no king may make his ability known. Another aspect of his resources is that he must have the means of support for his tools, the three classes of men. These, then, are their means of support: land to live on, gifts, weapons, food, ale, clothing, and whatever else is necessary for each of the three classes of men. Without these things he cannot maintain the tools, nor without the tools can he accomplish any of the things he was commanded to do. Accordingly, I sought the resources with which to exercise the authority, in order that my skills and power would not be forgotten and concealed: because every skill and every authority is soon obsolete and passed over, if it is without wisdom; because no man may bring to bear any skill without wisdom...”

“From the cradle onwards,” wrote Bishop Asser, “in spite of all the demands of the present life, it has been the desire for wisdom, more than anything else, together with the nobility of his birth, which have characterized the nature of his noble mind.” But the bishop criticized his parents for not teaching the young Alfred to read until he was twelve. Nevertheless, he was a good listener, and memorized English poems recited by others. And then one day his mother his mother offered to give a beautifully embroidered book of English poetry to whichever of her five sons would learn it fastest. Alfred won the contest...

Having defeated the Danes, King Alfred not only indulged his passion for book learning, but decided to educate the whole of his kingdom. He lamented that

England, which had once been famed for her literary culture (especially Northumbria, the home of the Venerable Bede and of Alcuin, Charlemagne's "minister of education"), was now largely illiterate in Latin as a result of the Viking devastations. So he invited the last few learned men of the land to his court, and together with them and foreign imports such as the Frankish St. Grimbald, who founded a monastery in Winchester, he began an astonishingly ambitious programme of translation and copying.

Alfred did not at first know Latin, but having learned "by divine inspiration", according to Asser, both to read Latin and translate it into English "on one and the same day", he set about translating the following books which he judged to be "the most necessary for all men to know": St. Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care*, Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, St. Augustine's *Soliloquies* and the first fifty psalms of David. Moreover, several other works, including St. Gregory's *Dialogues* and the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* were translated by others at his initiative. In addition, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and an *Old English Martyrology* containing the lives of about two hundred saints were probably started in King Alfred's reign. Nor did King Alfred neglect the physical well-being of his subjects: a book containing cures for eighty-eight illnesses (listed in order from head to foot) was composed in his reign, and Alfred sent the second part of this work to Patriarch Elias of Jerusalem (together with alms for the Church of Jerusalem and "the monks of India").

Alfred sent his translations, together with prefaces written by himself, to the leading bishops of his kingdom, asking them to make further copies. In this way a strong vernacular tradition of sacred and secular literature grew up in England which continued to flourish into the tenth and eleventh centuries. This Anglo-Saxon vernacular tradition was unique in Western Europe in the Orthodox period, but was destroyed by the Roman Catholic Church after the Norman Conquest.

[Alfred the Man](#)

King Alfred's astonishingly broad range of achievements was accomplished in the face of enormous difficulties: enemies from without, inertia from within his kingdom, and extremely painful illnesses. As a youth, Alfred prayed to God for an illness that would help him suppress his carnal desires, and contracted piles. Later, during a visit to the shrine of St. Guerir (or Gwinear?) of Cornwall, he asked God to replace the piles with a less severe illness that would not be outwardly visible. The piles disappeared...

But then on his wedding day, in 868, he was suddenly struck by a new and mysterious illness which lasted until his forty-fifth year. "And if at any time through God's mercy," writes Bishop Asser, "that illness abated for the space of a day or a night or even of an hour, his fear and horror of that accursed pain would never desert him, but rendered him virtually useless – as it seemed to him – for heavenly and worldly affairs."

In spite of all this, continues the bishop, the king "did not refrain from directing

the government of the kingdom; pursuing all manner of hunting; giving instruction to all his goldsmiths and craftsmen as well as to his falconers, hawk-trainers and dog-keepers; making to his own design wonderful and precious new treasures which far surpassed any tradition of his predecessors; reading aloud from books in English and above all learning English poems by heart; issuing orders to his followers: all these things he did himself with great application to the best of his abilities. He was also in the invariable habit of listening daily to divine services and the Liturgy, and of participating in certain psalms and prayers and in the day-time and night-time offices, and, at night-time,.. of going (without his household knowing) to various churches in order to pray. He similarly applied himself attentively to charity and distribution of alms to the native population and to foreign visitors of all races, showing immense and incomparable kindness and generosity to all men, as well as to the investigation of things unknown. Wherefore many Franks, Frisians, Gauls, Vikings, Welshmen, Irishmen and Bretons subjected themselves willingly to his lordship, nobles and commoners alike; and, as befitted his royal status, he ruled, loved, honoured and enriched them all with wealth and authority, just as he did his own people. He was also in the habit of listening eagerly and attentively to Holy Scripture being read out by his own countrymen, or even, if the situation should somehow arise, of listening to these lessons in the company of foreigners. With wonderful affection he cherished his bishops and the entire clergy, his ealdormen and nobles, his officials as well as all his associates. Nor, in the midst of other affairs, did he cease from personally giving, by day and night, instruction to all in virtuous behaviour and tutelage in literacy to their sons, who were being brought up in the royal household and whom he loved no less than his own children."

Perhaps the only field in which King Alfred fell behind the achievements of other kings was in the founding of monasteries: he founded only two, a men's monastery at Athelney, and a women's monastery at Shaftesbury, whose first abbess was his daughter Aethelgifu. However, by his educational work, which was directed above all for the benefit of the Church, he made possible the great monastic revival of the tenth century. And if a man can be judged by his descendants, then he must be judged very highly; for his descendants in the tenth and eleventh centuries comprise one of the most distinguished dynasties in Orthodox history, with several canonized saints (the nuns Elgiva, Edburga and Edith, and Kings Edward the Martyr and Edward the Confessor).

Conclusion

King Alfred reposed in peace on October 26, 899. The great nineteenth-century historian of the Norman Conquest, Edward Augustus Freeman, called Alfred "the most perfect character in history". That was an exaggeration, but in Western Orthodox history, only King Alfred and Charlemagne among rulers have been accorded the title "the Great", and Alfred deserves the title much more than the heretical Charlemagne. Thoroughly Orthodox in faith (the Filioque found no place in English churches in his reign), Alfred accomplished more, in more directions, and in the face of greater difficulties, than any other ruler of the so-called "Dark

Ages". Unlike Charlemagne, he did not quarrel with the Orthodox Church in the East, but asked for the prayers of the Eastern Patriarchs. And if his kingdom was smaller and humbler than Charlemagne's, it lasted longer and produced more fruit... He saved English Orthodox civilization for another two hundred years.

So why, ask some contemporary English Orthodox, has Alfred never been counted among the saints? Perhaps because it is not known that his relics were incorrupt (they may have been found recently, together with those of his wife and daughter, in Winchester), nor that he worked miracles after his death. And yet his life was itself a continuous miracle, combining the courage and humility of David with the wisdom and justice of Solomon...

In any case, we can agree with his descendant, the tenth-century chronicler Aethelweard, who described him as "the unshakeable pillar of the western people, a man full of justice, vigorous in warfare, learned in speech, above all instructed in Divine learning... Now, O reader, say 'O Christ our Redeemer, save his soul!'"

October 26 / November 8, 2013; revised October 26 / November 8, 2015.

23. THE CALENDAR QUESTION IN BRITISH HISTORY

It is sometimes thought that disputes over the ecclesiastical calendar have taken place only in the Orthodox East. But this is not so. Two such disputes took place in British history, which are instructive for us even today.

In about the year 600, St. Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury, with the blessing of his spiritual father, St. Gregory the Dialogist, Pope of Rome, travelled to the west of Britain to meet the remnants of the British or Welsh Church, which had fled to the west during the barbarian invasions in the fifth century. Augustine had been given authority over the British bishops by St. Gregory; but the task of uniting with the British, as described by Bede, did not prove to be easy.

The first obstacle was that the British, having suffered much from the Anglo-Saxons, were not willing to join with Augustine in trying to convert them to the Faith. The second obstacle was that as a result of their isolation from the Church on the continent, the British did not know that the rest of the Universal Church had adopted a slightly different method of calculating the date of Pascha based on cycles of nineteen years. Unfortunately, the British and the Irish had not been informed of this change, and so they still celebrated Pascha according to a calendar based on a cycle of eighty-four years which they claimed derived from the holy Apostle John. This meant that on some years they celebrated Pascha on the 14th day of Nisan, whereas the Council of Nicaea had decreed that it should never be celebrated before the 15th. A third obstacle was that the British performed the sacrament of Baptism in an irregular manner.

St. Augustine stipulated three conditions for union: that the British should correct the two canonical irregularities; and that they should cooperate with him in converting the Saxons.

However, the British refused to accede on any of these points. At length, Augustine suggested that they pray to God to reveal His will in the following manner: "Let a sick person be brought near, and by whosoever's prayers he will be healed, let the faith and works of that one be judged devout before God and an example for men to follow."

The British reluctantly agreed, and a blind Saxon was brought before them.

The British clergy tried, but failed to heal him. But through Augustine's prayers he received recovery of his sight. The British were impressed, but pleaded for time in which to discuss these questions with their elders before coming to a decision.

Augustine travelled to his second meeting with the British accompanied by Saints Mellitus and Justus. The British were represented by seven bishops and Abbot Dinoth of the great monastery of Bangor, which had well over a thousand monks. Before the meeting they had approached a hermit and asked

him how they should answer Augustine. He said that if Augustine rose when they entered, this showed that he was humble and should be obeyed. If he did not rise, then they should not accede to him. Therefore when Augustine did not rise at their entrance, the British became angry and refused both to accept his stipulations and to acknowledge him as their archbishop. As the meeting broke up, St. Augustine prophesied that since the British had refused to cooperate in the conversion of the pagan English they would themselves be put to sword by the same English - a prophecy which was fulfilled a few years later, in 616, when the pagan King Aethelfrid of Northumbria defeated the British in battle at Chester and killed 1200 of the monks of Bangor, who had come to pray for their king.

In the next fifty years, the mission of St. Augustine and his successors was blessed with extraordinary success, and most of the east of Britain was re-converted to Christ. However, the British Christians in the West remained stubbornly separate. They refused to help in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons out of hatred for them as the conquerors of their homeland.

With the British refusing to cooperate, the mission field was left to the Romans, who came from the south and east and concentrated on the old Roman towns, and to the Irish, who came from the north and west and concentrated on the country districts. For the Irish did not have the Britons' hatred of the English, and some were converted to the Roman-Byzantine Paschalion. Thus in 634 the Irish Monk Cummian, who had accepted the Roman-Byzantine Paschalion, wrote to the Abbot of a Scottish monastery with considerable irony: "Rome is mistaken; Jerusalem is mistaken; Antioch is mistaken; the whole world is mistaken; the British and Irish alone hold the truth!"

The Roman and Irish missionaries met in the northern English kingdom of Northumbria. But here a problem arose; for King Oswy of Northumbria had been baptised in the Irish Church, following the Celtic calendar, whereas his queen had been baptised in the Roman Church, following the Roman calendar. Displeased that he and his wife were feasting and fasting at different times, the king convened a council of bishops in 663 from both the Roman and Irish traditions in the monastery of Whitby. As a result of this council, it was decided that all the Christians in the kingdom should follow the Roman calendar. A few years later, the Church of England, led by her Greek archbishop, St. Theodore (+691), decreed that all Christians who followed the Celtic calendar were schismatics.

This decision was accepted even by most of those Celtic Christians who had been brought up in the Celtic traditions. Thus St. Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne (+687), whose body was completely incorrupt until the Protestant Reformation, told his monks as he was dying: "Have no communion with those who err from the Catholic Faith, either by keeping Pascha at the wrong time, or by their perverse life. And know and remember: if of the two evils you are compelled to choose one, I would rather that you take up my bones, and leave

these places, to live wherever God may send you, than agree in any way with the wickedness of schismatics, and so place a yoke upon your necks."

Through the efforts of St. Adomnan and St. Egbert, the great Scottish monastery of Iona accepted the Byzantine Paschalion. The Welsh Church, alone among the Churches of the British Isles, remained in schism for a century. However, in 768 the last Welsh bishop, Edbod of Bangor, returned to the unity of the Orthodox Church. But the problem must have lingered on for a while. For it is recorded that a Welsh delegation visited St. Methodius, patriarch of Constantinople (+847) in order to discuss the calendar question...

But this was not the last time that a question relating to the Church calendar disturbed British Christians. And this time, when the British Christians found themselves in conflict with the Church of Rome, it was they who were right, and Rome wrong...

In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII introduced the new, Gregorian calendar, which was immediately anathematised by the Eastern Patriarchs led by Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople. Most of Europe accepted the change. But the British, who were Protestants, remained with the old calendar.

James Shapiro writes: "Shakespeare came of age when time itself was out of joint: the Western calendar, fixed by Julius Caesar in 46 BC (a meddling with nature deemed tyrannical by some of his fellow Romans), had by the late sixteenth century drifted ten days off the celestial cycle. Something had to be done. In 1577 Pope Gregory XIII proposed skipping ten days and in 1582 Catholic Europe acted upon his recommendations: it was agreed that the day after 4 October would be 15 October. [Queen] Elizabeth was ready to go along with this sensible change, but her bishops balked, unwilling to follow the lead of the Pope on this issue or any other. Other Protestant countries also opposed the change and, as a result, began to keep different time. By 1599 Easter was celebrated a full five weeks apart in Catholic and Protestant lands.

"There's an odd moment in Julius Caesar when Brutus, on the eve of Caesar's assassination, unsure of the date, asks his servant Lucius: 'Is not tomorrow, boy, the first of March?' (II, i, 40) and tells him to check 'the calendar' and let him know. Virtually all modern editions silently correct Brutus' 'blunder' (how could such an intelligent man be so wrong about the date?), changing his question to: 'Is not tomorrow, boy, the ides of March?' Elizabethans, though, would have smiled knowingly at Brutus' confusion in being off by a couple of weeks - as well as at his blindness to the significance of the day that would resound through history. They also knew, watching the events in the play that culminate in the ides of March, that virtually all the political upheaval their own nation had experienced since the Reformation - from the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, to the Cornish Rebellion of 1549, to the Northern Revellion of 1569, coincided with or had roots in feasts and holidays. As recently as 1596 the planners of the abortive Oxfordshire Rising had agreed that their armed insurrection, in which they would cut down gentlemen and head 'with all

speed towards London' to foment a national rising, would begin shortly after Queen Elizabeth's Accession Day, 17 November. 'Is this a holiday?' was a question that touched a deep cultural nerve..." (1599. *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*, London, 2005, pp. 169-170)

The "Old Calendar British" were supported in their stubbornness by a great miracle which took place every year in the town of Glastonbury. To this area, in the first years after the resurrection of Christ, Righteous Joseph of Arimathea had come, and there he died. One Christmas Day, when Righteous Joseph was preaching to the pagans, he planted his staff into the ground, and it suddenly sprouted leaves and flowers. The saint used this miracle to explain that Christ was born as a flower of the root of Jesse.

Every year after this the tree would sprout flowers on Christmas Day - according to the Old Calendar. From the seventeenth century it became a tradition to present some flowers from Joseph's tree to the king. On receiving the blossom, King Charles I, who was later beheaded during the English revolution, said:

"Well, this is a miracle, isn't it?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, a miracle peculiar to England and regarded with great veneration by the [Roman] Catholics."

"How?" said the king, "when this miracle opposes itself to the [Roman] pope? You bring me this miraculous blossom on Christmas Day, Old Style. Does it always observe the Old Style, by which we English celebrate the Nativity, at its time of flowering?"

"Always."

"Then the pope and your miracle differ not a little, for he always celebrates Christmas Day ten days earlier by the calendar of the new style..."

Finally, in 1752 the British government decided to accept the papist calendar in order to keep in line with the rest of Western Europe. However, at Christmas, crowds gathered to see what the tree would do. The tree did not change calendar, but blossomed on December 25 according to the old, patristic calendar (January 5 new style, the difference being only eleven days at that time)! There were riots, and many at first refused to accept the new calendar.

Today British Orthodox Christians are again divided over a calendar question. The majority follow the new Grigorian calendar, which was imposed upon the official churches of Greece and Romania in 1924, and has now spread to several other churches. A glance at the history of Orthodoxy in our islands will show that the calendar question is an extremely important one, being a question, not of "thirteen days" merely, but of Christian unity in faith and

worship, and that salvation is to be found only in following the Julian calendar sanctioned by the First Ecumenical Council and the Holy Fathers of the One, Holy, Orthodox-Catholic and Apostolic Church.

*January 6/19, 2005; revised January 22 / February 4, 2014 and October 30 /
November 12, 2015.*

24. THE LESSONS OF ROCOR'S FALL

There is no more tragic or traumatic event in recent Church history than the fall of the Russian Church Abroad (ROCOR) into the hands of the apostate Moscow Patriarchate (MP) in May, 2007. Apart from the horror of the loss of so many souls into the graceless pit of World Orthodoxy, the draining and debilitating effect of the fall on those Churches that continued to remain faithful was immediately felt and continues to be felt to this day. But more surprising – and still more alarming – is the lack of analysis of why this spiritual catastrophe took place. Such an analysis, and the drawing of the appropriate lessons from it, is absolutely necessary. After all, it remains forever true that those who will not learn from history are condemned to repeat it...

If we survey the pages of sacred history, we see that the roots of such catastrophes often lie very far back in the past. Ancient Israel showed signs of apostasy already well before her first exile to Babylon. The Orthodox West was showing alarming signs of heresy centuries before her final fall in 1054. Undoubtedly a deep analysis of the fall of ROCOR will take us back to certain wrong decisions or attitudes as far back as the 1920s, or even perhaps to the faults of the pre-revolutionary Russian Church. However, we cannot go so far back within the confines of the present article: it will be sufficient to look at the period of service of the last two first-hierarchs of ROCOR – Metropolitan Philaret (+1985) and Metropolitan Vitaly (+2006).

Metropolitan Philaret assumed the leadership of ROCOR in the middle of the 1960s, at a time of extreme crisis in the Russian Church. At the bidding of her KGB masters, the Moscow Patriarchate had entered the World Council of Churches at the General Assembly in New Delhi in 1961, and was obediently followed by all the other Local Churches situated behind the Iron Curtain. Very soon, she was cooperating with the Ecumenical Patriarchate in leading the other Orthodox Churches into the more extreme expressions of the ecumenist heresy – that is, the recognition not only of Christian heretics, such as the Catholics and Protestants but also of non-Christian religions, such as Judaism and Islam, as agents of salvation. But even before that, she had convinced the WCC – a largely western, Protestant body – to support communist revolution in the Third World. Thus the official Russian Church, already broken by Stalin into an obedient tool of Soviet power, had become (and remains to this day) a leading, “organic”, fully-paid-up member of the general, world-wide twentieth-century apostasy from Christianity – or, as Boris Talantov (+1972) put it, “a secret agent of worldwide anti-christianity”.

Right from the beginning, Metropolitan Philaret humbly and courageously attacked the ecumenists’ deadly heresy. First, he exposed it in his “Sorrowful Epistles” (1965-72). Then, at his keynote address at the Third All-Diaspora Council in Jordanville in 1974, he made it clear that the purpose of the Council was to define ROCOR’s relationship to the ecumenical movement: “First of all, the Council must declare not only for the Russian flock, but for the entire Church, its concept of the Church; to reveal the dogma of the Church... The

Council must determine the place our Church Abroad holds within contemporary Orthodoxy, among the other 'so-called' churches. We say 'so-called' for though now they often speak of many 'churches', the Church of Christ is single and One."³⁵⁸

By this time, many non-Russians, impressed by the metropolitan's zealot stance, had sought refuge in ROCOR; and in 1969-71 this movement was strengthened by the entrance of two Greek Old Calendarist Synods into communion with her. Thus ROCOR was no longer an exclusively Russian jurisdiction in the make-up of her members, and she could no longer be seen as simply an outpost of Russian Orthodox anti-communism. She was a multi-ethnic, missionary Church fighting the main heresies of the age on a number of fronts throughout the world.

Among the "zealots" who shared this vision of ROCOR were Archbishops Averky of Syracuse, Anthony of Los Angeles and Nikodem of Great Britain³⁵⁹, and Protopresbyter George (later Bishop Gregory) Grabbe.³⁶⁰ However, most of the hierarchs saw the isolation of ROCOR from other local Churches as necessitated, not so much by the struggle against ecumenism, as by the need to preserve *Russianness* among the Russian émigrés. This created a problem for a Church that was rapidly filling up with non-Russian converts. It was not that the preservation of Russianness as such was not an undoubted good. The problem arose when it hindered the missionary witness of the Church to non-Russian believers. Such phyletistic tendencies inevitably led to a loss of Church consciousness in relation to ecumenism, and to a feeling that ROCOR was closer to Russians of the MP, ecumenist though they might be, than to True Orthodox Christians of Greek or French or American origin. Thus while the majority of hierarchs had passively acquiesced in Metropolitan Philaret's "Sorrowful Epistles", and in the union with the Greek Old Calendarists, they began to stir when the consequences of this were spelled out by the "zealots" in ROCOR: no further communion with "World Orthodoxy".

Thus the leader of one of the Greek Old Calendarist parishes within ROCOR, Fr. Panagiotis Carras, sent an appeal to the Synod of Bishops on August 24,

³⁵⁸ Third All-Diaspora Council, 1974, Protocol 1, August 26 / September 8, Synodal Archives, p. 2; quoted in Nun Vassa (Larin) "'Glory be to God, Who did not Abandon His Church', The Self-Awareness of ROCOR at the Third All-Diaspora Council of 1974", p. 2.

<http://www.russianorthodoxchurch.ws/01newstructure/pagesen/articles/svassasobor.htm>.

³⁵⁹ For example, in 1971 Archbishop Nikodem wrote to the Bishops' Council: "The clergy under my jurisdiction are fully aware that the ecumenical movement constitutes a violation (narushenie) of the Dogma of the Church" (in Protodeacon Christopher Birchall, *Embassy, Emigrants, and Englishmen: The Three Hundred Year History of a Russian Orthodox Church in London*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Publications, 2014, p. 469).

³⁶⁰ "In his report to Metropolitan Philaret on 7 December of 1972, Archpriest George Grabbe, who then headed the Synod's External Affairs Department, protested against Bishops Nikon and Laurus having united in prayer with Archbishop Iakovos during the visit of the relics of St. Nicholas to the Greek Church in Flushing, NY. His protest was motivated on the basis of determinations of the ROCOR Councils of Bishops of 1967 and 1971 that its clergy must by all means avoid prayerful communion with hierarchs who were ecumenists, and even more so because ROCOR had accepted clerics who had left these other churches for 'dogmatic reasons'."

1974 on behalf of all “non-Russian monasteries, parishes, and laity of ROCOR”, in which he called on the ecumenists to be labelled as heretics who had lost the Holy Spirit and who should be subjected to the canonical sanctions that apply to heretics and schismatics. In response, Metropolitan Philaret moved for an official statement that the MP was graceless. According to the witness of a seminarian present at the Council, the majority of bishops and delegates would have supported such a motion. However, at the last minute the metropolitan was persuaded not to proceed with the motion on the grounds that it would have caused a schism.³⁶¹

The unofficial leader of the lukewarm group of bishops was Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, supported by Archbishop Philotheus of Hamburg, Bishop Paul of Stuttgart³⁶² and Bishop Laurus of Manhattan – the hierarch who as metropolitan led ROCOR into the Moscow Patriarchate in 2007. Later the group was joined by Bishop Mark of Germany... Archbishop Anthony was a powerful hierarch who had already once apostasized to the Moscow Patriarchate.³⁶³ He continually proclaimed that the MP was a true Church with the grace of sacraments.³⁶⁴ And in his address to the Council, entitled “Our Church in the Modern World”, he declared: “By the example of our First Hierarchs [Anthony and Anastasy] we must carefully preserve those fine threads which bind us with the Orthodox world. Under no circumstances must we isolate ourselves, seeing around us, often imagined, heretics and schismatics. Through gradual self-isolation we will fall into the extremism which our metropolitans wisely avoided, we will reject that middle, royal path which until now our Church has travelled... By isolating ourselves, we will embark upon the path of sectarianism, fearing everyone and everything, we will become possessed with paranoia.”³⁶⁵

³⁶¹ Fr. Basil Yakimov, “Re: Fundamental Question”, orthodox-synod@yahoo.groups.com, 4 June, 2003.

³⁶² Nun Vassa, *op. cit.*

³⁶³ “In 1945, being in Serbia, he went over to the MP and waited for a Soviet passport so as to go to the USSR, but the Soviet authorities took their time with the passport, bestowing on him in the meantime the rank of archimandrite [through Patriarch Alexis I]. But, fed up with waiting for permission to return, [in 1949] the future bishop left for Switzerland to his brother Bishop Leontius, where he was reunited with ROCOR, having received a penance for his joining the MP.” (Vladimir Kirillov, May 15, 2006 <http://elmager.livejournal.com/66190.html?thread=283278>; Bernard le Caro, “A Short Biography of Archbishop Anthony (Bartoshevich) of Geneva and Western Europe (+1993)”, http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/vl_antony_b.pdf). However, to get out to the West was almost impossible at that time without the “blessing” and cooperation of the Soviet authorities...

³⁶⁴ The problem, as he put it to the present writer in 1976, was that the MP did not “use” this grace well.

³⁶⁵ Archbishop Anthony particularly resented the influence of the Greek Old Calendarists and the Greeks within ROCOR. As he wrote to Fr. George Grabbe after the Council: “To trail along behind the Greek Old Calendarists, taking Fr. Panteleimon [Abbot of the Greek-American monastery of the Holy Transfiguration in Boston] for a prophet – this I cannot do. From my point, I am deeply convinced that this would be a betrayal of the Church. For you and me who used to have such universal teachers as Metropolitan Anthony and Archbishop Gavriil... Now even though we see the absurdities committed by the Greek Old Calendarists, we are still trying to accommodate and placate them, though we ourselves are slipping into a sect, cutting

This somewhat hysterical appeal not to show “paranoia” and separate from the World Orthodox at just the point when they were embarking upon “super-ecumenism” was criticized by Fr. George Grabbe: “The report does not mention to the degree necessary, maybe, that life goes on, and the sickness of ecumenism deepens and widens more and more. Condescension, *oikonomia*, must under different circumstances be applied differently, and to different degrees. In doses too great it can betray the Truth.” Then Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles recalled that “we have many Greek [Old Calendarist] parishes. Our concelebration with the new calendarists was very bitter for them.”³⁶⁶

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The struggle for the true faith between the zealots and their opponents in ROCOR continued with increasing intensity into the 1980s. It exposed more than the heretics of World Orthodoxy: it also exposed a rottenness at the heart of ROCOR. For too long ROCOR had occupied a kind of indeterminate, neutral position in relation to the heretics of World Orthodoxy. On the one hand, ROCOR never officially accepted sergianism or ecumenism or the new calendar. But on the other hand, she refused to issue definitive condemnations of these heretical phenomena, allowing the opinion to gain hold that sergianists, ecumenists and new calendarists, while in error, were not outside the True Church, and still had the grace of sacraments.

Fr. Steven Allen writes: “From the start, one needs to recognize that the ROCOR never formally broke communion with any jurisdiction of World Orthodoxy except the Moscow Patriarchate, the Evlogian Parisian schism, and the North American Metropolia/OCA schism, i.e., the other Russian groups.

“Many in the Genuine Orthodox Church of Greece, used to decades of detailed, agonizing, and careful articulations of, and impassioned arguments about, ecclesiology, find it hard to realize that for most of its history, most of ROCOR's bishops and clergy did not think carefully about such questions, except perhaps in regard to the Moscow Patriarchate and the other Russian groups. There were outstanding individuals in the ROCOR, such as the Holy Confessor Metropolitan Philaret, who saw clearly how ROCOR should deal with the apostasy of global ‘World Orthodoxy,’ but most of the ROCOR bishops and clergy simply had an instinctive (albeit healthy) distaste for modernism and ecumenism that never led them further - to undertake the process of rational discussion necessary to make clear decisions about these problems.

“The ROCOR's official policies regarding concelebration with jurisdictions other than those mentioned above, were never consistent, and the policy as it developed in the 1960's and onward, of mostly not concelebrating, was

ourselves off from universal unity”

³⁶⁶ *Protocol № 4 of the All-Diaspora Council, August 29 / September 11, 1974; Synodal Archives, p. 4; Nun Vassa, op. cit.*

unwritten and de facto, not de jure. The ROCOR synod allowed the diocesan bishops almost complete discretion in this matter, and therefore the practice varied from one diocese to another. The most obvious contrast was between the North American dioceses, which were generally strict, and the European diocese, most of whose clergy, following the lead of their 'abba,' Abp. Anthony of Geneva, always saw themselves as part of 'World' Orthodoxy and were willing to concelebrate with anyone other than the Soviets and the Evlogians, including the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

"Thus ROCOR had completely pro-World Orthodox bishops and clergy who denied that the ecumenism of "World" Orthodoxy was an impediment to concelebration and naturally objected loudly to anathematizing the ecumenists."³⁶⁷

In 1983 a decisive stage in the struggle was reached when the ROCOR Synod, reacting to a particularly shocking manifestation of "super-ecumenism" at the Vancouver General Assembly of the WCC, declared: "To those who attack the Church of Christ by teaching that Christ's Church is divided into so-called 'branches' which differ in doctrine and way of life, or that the Church does not exist visibly, but will be formed in the future when all 'branches' or sects or denominations, and even religions will be united in one body; and who do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation; therefore to those who have communion with these aforementioned heretics or advocate, disseminate, or defend their new heresy of Ecumenism under the pretext of brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, **Anathema.**"³⁶⁸

This anathema against ecumenism appeared to signal the victory of the zealot position within ROCOR. Unfortunately, the victory was short-lived: Archbishop Anthony and his supporters had not given up the fight. He continued to concelebrate with the heretics of World Orthodoxy, and even, in 1986, ordered his Paris clergy to concelebrate with the new calendarists in Greece, and not with the Old Calendarists - which immediately led to their leaving ROCOR...

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But this took place after the death of Metropolitan Philaret in 1985. While he was alive, some semblance of canonical order was maintained although it was frayed at the edges. However, the new metropolitan, Vitaly, was a very different

³⁶⁷ Allen, "The Demise of ROCOR, the Synod of Metropolitan Agathangel, and the Ecclesiology of the Cyprianite 'Synod in Resistance'" (2010), www.roacusa.org.

³⁶⁸ See "A Contemporary Patristic Document", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, November 14/27, 1983, p. 3; "Encyclical Letter of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 33, № 6, November-December, 1983, p. 13; Bishop Hilarion of Manhattan, "Answers to Questions Posed by the Faithful of the Orthodox Parish in Somerville, South Carolina", *Sunday of the Myrrhbearers*, 1992.

personality who made little effort to maintain canonical discipline in the Church. As Fr. Steven Allen writes, “during the sad, twilight reign of Metropolitan Vitaly, who never seemed to be able to make up his mind whose side he was on, this [zealot] party completely lost their grip on the direction of their Church.”

In his Nativity Epistle for 1986/87, Vitaly declared that the 1983 anathema against ecumenism had no universal significance, but applied only to members of ROCOR. “From that point on, the Anathema was a dead letter; there were cathedrals where the ruling bishops disdained even to proclaim it pro forma on the Sunday of Orthodoxy.”³⁶⁹ Zealots around the world were dismayed; a large exodus of non-Russian parishes from ROCOR began to take place.

Unfortunately for ROCOR, this change in leadership coincided with *glasnost* and *perestroika* in Russia. By the time the Soviet Union finally fell in 1991, a wave of enthusiasm for the supposedly “resurrected” Homeland had swept the rank-and-file. As in 1945, people put “Russianness” above Orthodoxy; they began to wonder openly why ROCOR should not be in communion with “the Mother Church” of the Moscow Patriarchate now that she was magically free both from the atheist yoke and all heresy – in spite of remaining firmly controlled by the KGB and still in the WCC...

ROCOR had started to accept parishes within Russia in the spring of 1990. But almost immediately confusion arose over whether ROCOR was the only True Church of the Russian people, or whether her rival, the MP, also had grace. On May 3/16, 1990, the ROCOR Synod issued a statement that was in general strongly anti-MP, but which contained the qualification that there might be true priests dispensing valid sacraments in the patriarchate nevertheless. The idea that there can be true priests in a heretical church is canonical nonsense (Apostolic Canon 46), and Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) immediately obtained the removal of the offending phrase. But the damage had been done...

Worse was to follow. Bishops and priests visiting Russia from abroad often showed an extraordinary inability to distinguish between the true Church and the false. Thus Archbishop Lavr, on visiting a village in which there existed a ROCOR priest, chose instead to stay with the local MP priest! Another bishop proposed entering into union with the Ukrainian *samosvyaty* and the fascist organization “Pamyat”! A third shared some holy relics with – the MP Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk (KGB agent “Ostrovsky”)!

The veneration shown by some foreign ROCOR clergy for the MP was very difficult to understand for Russian believers, for whom ROCOR represented purity and light in the surrounding darkness, and who thought that ROCOR’s mission in Russia was to rescue them from the MP. Still more shocking was the way in which visiting ROCOR bishops publicly slandered their colleagues in

³⁶⁹ Allen, *op. cit.*

Russia. Thus Archbishop Mark of Germany publicly called Bishop Valentine (Rusantsov) of Suzdal "a wolf in sheep's clothing". Then, - together with Bishop Barnabas of Cannes, who in 1992 had been appointed, completely uncanonically, as the Synod's representative in Russia with authority over all its parishes there, - Mark proceeded to do everything in his power to undermine the work of Bishop Valentine.

Later it became clear who was the wolf in sheep's clothing. In 1997 Archbishop Mark had a secret meeting with "Patriarch" Alexis (KGB Agent "Drozdov"). Soon after, with the very active support of Mark, the "patriarch" took over ROCOR's monastery in Hebron, Israel. Could all this be linked, wondered believers, with the fact that in 1979 Mark was detained at Leningrad airport for more than 24 hours for the possession of anti-Soviet literature, and was then released unharmed, claiming that "nothing had happened"?³⁷⁰

The destructive work of Archbishop Mark and Bishop Barnabas elicited a series of protests from the episcopate within Russia. But no reply came. Eventually, in order to protect their own flocks from this invasion by supposed "friends" and "colleagues" from abroad, the Russian bishops were forced to form their own autonomous Higher Church Administration, on the basis of the same patriarchal ukaz no. 362 which had formed the basis for ROCOR's formation as an independent Church body in the 1920s. At this point (1994), the writing was already on the wall for ROCOR's mission in Russia. If she repulsed even the most loyal and successful of her leaders on Russian soil, treating them as enemies and traitors, how could she claim to be the leader of True Russian Orthodoxy anywhere in the world?

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Meanwhile, the search was on for an ecclesiological justification for entering into communion with the old enemy. Justification was found in the *Ecclesiological Theses* (1984) of the defrocked Old Calendarist Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili, who asserted that heretics remained in the Church until ousted by an Ecumenical Council. The MP had not been expelled by such a Council. Therefore she had grace. Therefore it was not only right but imperative, according to the Russian liberals, that communion be established with her...

At her 1994 Council in San Francisco, ROCOR, urged on by Archbishop Mark, officially adopted the Cyprianite ecclesiology and entered into communion with the Cyprianites. Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) - who had been sacked as the Synod Secretary by Metropolitan Vitaly in 1986 - wrote: "I have had the opportunity to get to know several letters of one of the bishops of

³⁷⁰ The former KGB Colonel Constantine Preobrazhensky, now a subdeacon in ROCOR (A), accused Mark of having been enrolled in the KGB or the Stasi at precisely that time. Moreover, Agent Arndt helped "the organs" "to subject the Church Abroad to Moscow, so as to take control of the Russian emigration" ("Dve Tajny arkhiepiskopa Marka", *Portal-credo*, 12 May, 2004). Archbishop Mark immediately responded: "I have never and nowhere been arrested, and I will not comment on every absurdity".

Metropolitan Cyprian's group. From them it is evident that both he and his bishop confess their own, by no means Orthodox teaching on the possibility of the action of the Holy Spirit in Churches that have clearly become heretical. ALL the new calendarists, without a single exception, are also active ecumenists. But the Old Calendarist Churches (the Russian and the Serbian) have also for a long time confessed the same heresy.

“And now a hierarch of Metropolitan Cyprian's group insists on the thought that ‘The new calendarists, besieged by the heresy of ecumenism and innovations, HAVE NOT LOST GRACE, or, in any case, it is not in our competence to declare this from our side... we are speaking not about union with Beliar, but (only) with those who are sick in faith, some of whom need spiritual healing... in view of this, we have not fully broken communion with them.’ In another place the same hierarch expressed the thought – completely unacceptable and absurd from a canonical and patristic point of view – that his group, in recognizing grace in the new calendarists (he tries not to link them too clearly with the ecumenists) are only ‘walling ourselves off from error’.

“In issuing its Definition on communion with Metropolitan Cyprian's group, our Council has unfortunately not remembered also the text of the Definition accepted earlier under the presidency of Metropolitan Philaret, which anathematized the ecumenist heresy. In it these words of warning are found: ‘and to those who have communion with these heretics or help them, or defend their new heresy of ecumenism under the pretext of brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, **Anathema.**’

“In truth, by not examining the matter seriously enough, and forgetting about this earlier anathematization of the new calendarists and ecumenists..., our Council, however terrible it may be to recognize this, has fallen under its own anathema...”

Bishop Gregory ended by expressing the hope that this mistake would be rectified at the Lesna Sobor in five months' time. But it was not. And Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles told the present writer at that Sobor that “ROCOR is going to hell...”

Now Bishop Gregory was close to the group of Russian bishops led by Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine, who, as we have seen, had been forced to create an autonomous administration to defend themselves against the attacks of Archbishop Mark and others. At the Lesna Sobor in November, 1994, Lazarus and Valentine made a last despairing effort to restore unity with the bishops abroad. Unity *was* restored, but only for a short time...

In February, 1995, seizing on some false information provided by Bishop Evtikhy, the ROCOR Synod banned five of the Russian bishops, expelling them from their midst without even an investigation or trial. The banned bishops had no choice but to resurrect their autonomous administration – but this time not in communion with ROCOR. The loss of the majority of its flock inside

Russia – five bishops and thousands of laity – seems to have troubled the leaders of ROCOR not at all; in fact, they were glad that they were rid of this obstacle on the way to their goal – the union of ROCOR with the MP.³⁷¹

At this point, ROCOR had been holed below the water-line by the Cyprianite iceberg and was sinking fast. Those bishops who thought correctly had either died or been expelled. De facto control of the Church had been seized from the weak hands of Metropolitan Vitaly by Bishops Mark of Berlin, Lavr of Jordanville, and Hilarion of Eastern America.

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In October, 2000, a ROCOR Council that has been aptly called “the second October revolution” officially recognized the MP and asked the Serbian Patriarch Pavle to help in promoting the union of the MP with ROCOR. Most bishops signed this shameful decree, but then some repented and ran for the lifeboats, including Metropolitan Vitaly himself and the senior Russian Archbishops Lazarus of Tambov and Benjamin of the Black Sea. However, one bishop in Lazarus’ group, Agathangel of Odessa, repented of his repentance and went back into communion with the new first-hierarchy of ROCOR, Metropolitan Lavr.³⁷²

In the years that followed, until the final official union with Moscow, the Lavrite Synod conducted a pseudo-negotiation with the MP over three supposed sticking-points: (1) the veneration of the New Martyrs of Russia, (2) sergianism and (3) ecumenism. However, these “sticking-points” turned out to be nothing of the sort; the Lavrites surrendered on all of them. So we now had the sight of the MP: (1) venerating true martyrs (but not all of them) on a par with false, sergianist “martyrs”, (2) being more tied to and servile towards the KGB state than ever, and (3) as deeply immersed in the apostate WCC and the pan-heretical ecumenical movement as ever.

Bishop Agathangel jumped off the sinking ship at the very last moment, on May 17, 2007, just as ROCOR was disappearing beneath the waves. While asserting that all the acts of the Lavrite Synod up to that point had been valid, he refused to say that the MP was graceless, but declared that all the bishops and priests who had fled the sinking ship of ROCOR before him were schismatics and graceless! Then he re-entered communion with the Cyprianites, and created a new hierarchy with their aid. In 2014 even the True Orthodox Church of Greece was sucked into this anti-canonical union.

³⁷¹ V. Moss, “The Free Russian Orthodox Church: A Short History (1982-1998)”, <http://www.roacusa.org/htdocs/1.html>; *The Battle for the Russian Orthodox Church*, https://www.academia.edu/10248488/THE_BATTLE_FOR_THE_RUSSIAN_ORTHODOX_CHURCH.

³⁷² V. Moss, “A Short History of the Fall of ROCOR, 2000-2007”, in *The Battle for the Russian Orthodox Church*, https://www.academia.edu/10248488/THE_BATTLE_FOR_THE_RUSSIAN_ORTHODOX_CHURCH.

This uncanonical and in essence schismatical hierarchy Agathangel had the effrontery to call ROCOR (A). But in a sense he was right. For he had recreated the old, vacillating and lukewarm ROCOR led by the traitors Lavr, Mark and Hilarion – but in no way the still older and more zealous ROCOR of St. Philaret of New York...

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Of course, this brief account only touches on one or two of the many causes of the fall of ROCOR. Nevertheless, we are now in a position to draw the following lessons from this sorry tale of treachery and deceit:-

1. It is impossible to fight a successful war against heretics and schismatics with one hand tied behind one's back – that is, without telling the whole truth about these heretics, that they are outside the True Church and deprived of the grace of sacraments. If that truth is denied or repressed, the result will be the eventual fall of the True Christians into the opposing camp of the heretics. This is what happened to ROCOR in 1986-2007.
2. Even those who remain in the True Church will be weakened spiritually, their ranks will continue to be thinned and divided and the heretics will be strengthened, unless the false ecclesiological belief underlying this attitude is driven out of the Church.
3. Therefore the false teaching that it is possible to be a heretic or schismatic and yet at the same time a member of the True Church and have the grace of sacraments – which we know as Cyprianism – must be explicitly anathematized and in no way allowed as a permissible opinion. This teaching was in fact anathematized in ROCOR's 1983 anathema against ecumenism in the phrase that condemns those “who do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation”. This anathema must therefore be recognized by all as expressing the Mind of Christ and of His Holy Church, and placed in the foundation of the new building of the True Russian Church, as proclaiming infallibly that the MP and the whole of “World Orthodoxy” are heretics and schismatics who are deprived of the grace of sacraments.

October 30 / November 12, 2051; revised December 7/20, 2017.

25. GENETICS, UFOS AND THE BIRTH OF THE ANTICHRIST

Introduction

If the first half of the twentieth century was distinguished by an amazing increase in our knowledge of the physical world, the second half was distinguished by an even more amazing increase in our knowledge of the biological world, and especially the world of human genetics and human

reproduction. The vital break-through here was the discovery of DNA in 1953. Then came the introduction of the contraceptive pill, *in vitro* fertilisation and surrogate motherhood. As one journalist put it: "First, contraception severed the connection between sex and reproduction. It became possible to have sex without having babies. Then modern technology severed the connection between reproduction and sex. It became possible to have babies without having sex."³⁷³ The most alarming developments have been genetic manipulation and cloning. Animal clones have been produced, and claims have even been made for a human clone.³⁷⁴

As early as 1976, the director of the Institute of Genetics of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Academician N.P. Dubinin, was predicting the scale of this revolution: "The achievements of human genetics, and of general and molecular genetics, will push forward the problem of interference in human heredity. The coming revolution in genetics will demand a decisive overturning of the previously dominant view concerning the primacy of nature in its natural form. Genetics will turn out to be capable of overcoming the natural story of life and creating organic forms inconceivable in the light of the laws of natural evolution... For the molecular genetics and the molecular biology of the 21st century there lies in store the prospect of creating cells as the only self-regulating open living system, which will be bound up with the understanding of the essence of life. An exchange of living forms will take place between the earth and other worlds... The aim of genetic engineering is the creation of organisms according to a given model, whose hereditary program is formed by means of introducing the recipient of new genetic information. This information can be artificially synthesised or separated in the form of natural genetic structures from various organisms. In this way a new single genetic system which cannot arise by means of natural evolution will be created experimentally... Various manipulations with DNA molecules can lead to the unforeseen creation of biologically dangerous hybrid forms..."³⁷⁵

After quoting this passage, Fr. Vladislav Sveshnikov expressed the truly apocalyptic fear: "**We have to admit that contemporary science is preparing the ground for the coming of the Antichrist.**"³⁷⁶ How? By the manipulation of genes in order to produce the "superman" or "man-god" of Nietzsche's imagination, who will be at the same time the "devil-man" or "Antichrist" of Christian patristic teaching. In more recent years, with the mapping of the human genome, and the development of ever more sophisticated methods of genetic manipulation, these fantastical ideas seem less fantastical by the day...

The purpose of this article is to show the light shed by the Holy Fathers on this possible link between genetic science and the birth of the Antichrist, and

³⁷³ Anthony Daniels, "How far has humanity sunk when we treat the creation of life just like ordering a new car?", *Daily Mail* (London), August 13, 2001, p. 12.

³⁷⁴ David Fisher, "Russians 'have human clones'", *Metro* (London), August 13, 2001, p. 4.

³⁷⁵ Dubinin, *Obschaia Genetika*, Moscow: Nauka, 1976; quoted by Protopriest Vladislav Sveshnikov, "Rabota adova delaetsa uzhe", *Kontinent*, 71, 1992, pp. 270-271.

³⁷⁶ Sveshnikov, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

also on what may be meant by Dubinin's words: "*An exchange of living forms will take place between the earth and other worlds...*"

1. Man, not demon

The birth of the Antichrist is described by the Fathers as being from an unclean woman of the tribe of Dan. This is the teaching of St. Irenaeus of Lyons³⁷⁷, St. Hippolytus of Rome³⁷⁸, St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Ambrose of Milan and Blessed Jerome³⁷⁹ in the West, and of St. Narses of Armenia³⁸⁰, St. John Chrysostom³⁸¹, Blessed Theodoretus of Cyr³⁸² and St. John of Damascus³⁸³ in the East. In the *Synaxarion* for Meatfare Sunday, the Sunday of the Last Judgement, we read: "The Antichrist will come and be born, as St. Hippolytus of Rome says, of a polluted woman, a supposed virgin, a Jewess of the tribe of Dan".³⁸⁴

The most detailed description of this tradition is to be found in St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher of Mount Athos (+1596): "The Antichrist will be born of an unclean, wanton maid. All debaucheries will be united within this maid, and she will be the treasure house of fornication. Every evil of the world, every uncleanness, every sin will be embodied in her. Through her conceiving from secret wantonness, all sins will be combined in a womb of uncleanness and will be brought to life together with the spiritual impoverishment of the world. When the world will be deprived of the grace of the Most Holy Spirit, then the Antichrist will come to life in the womb of the unclean, from the most filthy and impure woman to have lived, though she will appear as a virgin. Conceived from such secret and unnatural wantonness, the offspring will be the container of every evil, as opposed to the way in which Christ was the ideal

³⁷⁷ "Receiving all the power of the devil,... summing up within himself the apostasy of the devil" (*Against Heresies*, V, 25, 1).

³⁷⁸ "Just as the Saviour appeared in the form of a man, so he too [the Antichrist] will come in the form of a man" (*Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 6).

³⁷⁹ "Nor let us think that he [the Antichrist] is the devil or a demon, but a man in whom satan is to dwell wholly and bodily" (*On Daniel* 7.8).

³⁸⁰ "Think ye not that he is Satan, or a devil from among his hosts. No, but a man lost in mind and soul of the tribe of Dan." (In W. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999, 254).

³⁸¹ "Who is he? Is he Satan? By no means, but some man, who allows him to work fully in him. For he is a man... He will not introduce idolatry, but will be a kind of opponent to God; he will abolish all the gods, and will order men to worship him instead of God, and he will be seated in the temple of God, not only the one in Jerusalem, but also in every church..." (*Homily 3 on II Thessalonians*).

³⁸² "Before Christ's Coming there shall appear in the world the enemy of man, the opponent of God, vested in human nature." (*A Short Exposition of the Divine Dogmas*, 23).

³⁸³ "The devil himself does not become man in the way that the Lord was made man. God forbid! But he becomes man as the offspring of fornication and receiveth all the energy of Satan. For God, knowing the strangeness of the choice that he would make, allows the devil to take up his abode in him. Born of a fornicator, he shall be raised in secret, shall be announced to all unexpectedly, and will ascend the throne." (*Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV, 26).

³⁸⁴ *Lenten Triodion*, Moscow: Synodal Press, 1897, pp. 30b-31a.

of every good quality, and His Most Pure Mother was the ideal of womanhood.”³⁸⁵

The question is: who will be the father? Since the Antichrist will attempt to imitate Christ in all things, it has been suggested by some of the Fathers that he will try to imitate Him also in His birth. Thus just as Christ was born of the Virgin, so the Antichrist will be born of a supposed virgin; and just as Christ had no human father, but was conceived of the Holy Spirit, so the Antichrist will have no human father, but will be conceived of - the devil?

Such an idea *appears* to have been suggested by the further words of St. Nilus: “Yea, he will be born of seed, but without man’s sowing. He will be born with seed, but not with the seed of a man.” And some expressions from some early Western Fathers might seem to encourage this hypothesis. Thus both St. Constantine’s tutor, Lactantius³⁸⁶ and St. Martin of Tours³⁸⁷ say that the Antichrist will be “conceived by an evil spirit”, while Ambrosiaster (probably a fourth-century Roman) writes: “As the Son of God in His human birth manifested His Divine nature, so also shall Satan appear in human form.”³⁸⁸ In fact, Bousset claims that “the tradition wavers between the concept of the Antichrist as of a man controlled by the devil and that of his identification with Satan.”³⁸⁹

However, this is an exaggeration. The consensus of the Fathers rules out a real incarnation of the devil in a man. Nevertheless, the Fathers do not deny that the devil will *try* to incarnate himself in a man in imitation of Christ’s Incarnation. Thus Blessed Theodoretus of Cyrus writes: “The persecutor of men imitates the incarnation of our God and Saviour. And as He by assuming our human nature accomplished our salvation, so he [the devil], by choosing a man capable of receiving the fullness of his power, shall tempt man.”³⁹⁰

And in the middle of the tenth century, the French Abbot Adso of Montier-en-Der developed this idea as follows: “He is born by intercourse from a father and a mother, like other men - not, as some fantasize, from a virgin alone... But in the very beginning of his conception the devil will at the same time enter into the womb of his mother and will totally fill her, and totally circumscribe her, and totally hold her, and totally possess her from without and within, so that she will conceive through a man with the devil’s cooperation, and that which will be born will be totally iniquitous, totally evil and totally lost...”³⁹¹

³⁸⁵ St. Nilus, in Archimandrite Pantaleimon, *A Ray of Light*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1976, p. 76.

³⁸⁶ Lactantius, *The Divine Statutes*, VII, 17.

³⁸⁷ St. Martin, in Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogue*, II, 14. Cf. Prosper of Aquitaine, *On the Promises and Predictions of God*, IV, 8.

³⁸⁸ Ambrosiaster, *On II Thessalonians*, ii, 2; in Bousset, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

³⁸⁹ Bousset, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

³⁹⁰ Blessed Theodoretus, *On II Thessalonians* 2.3.

³⁹¹ Adso, *Libellus de Antichristo*, 1292B.

2. Can demons unite with men?

Some further light has been shed on this mystery by St. Seraphim of Sarov, who prophesied: "Jesus Christ, the true God-Man, the Son of God the Father, was born in Israel by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the true Antichrist, the devil-man, will be born amidst the Russians. He will be the son of a fornicating woman of the tribe of Dan and the son of the devil through the artificial transfer to her of the seed of the man, with which the spirit of darkness will settle in her womb. But one of the Russians who will live to the time of the birth of the Antichrist (like Simeon the God-receiver, who announced the birth of the Child Jesus to the world) will curse the newborn babe and will announce to the world that it is the true Antichrist."³⁹²

So here we find a new twist, as it were, to what we might have been tempted to dismiss as the myth of the devil-man. The Antichrist will be truly man - on both his father's and his mother's side. But the fallen angelic nature will also be innate in him, being mixed with his father's seed even before his conception. At the same time, we may suppose, genetic engineering will take place on the seed, so as to make the child born of it the most brilliant and talented, but at the same time most corrupted person ever born! How costly for mankind is the transgressing of God's laws concerning marriage and the begetting of children - nothing less than the birth of the Antichrist!

Perhaps we can now better understand an apparent ambiguity in St. Andrew of Caesarea's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, in which he at one moment asserts that the "angelic substance" is assumed in the Antichrist (50.13), and at another that "the devil operates in the Antichrist" (51.45).

There *is* a sense in which the "angelic substance" is assumed in the Antichrist, since it is joined to him from his very conception, and therefore influences him from within and from the beginning, rather than possessing him from without and ex post facto. On the other hand, it is not a real incarnation of the devil, nor a real imitation of the Virgin Birth, since neither is his mother a virgin, nor is he without a human father. It is not, as Ambrosiaster puts it, that "as the Son of God in His human birth manifested His Divine nature, so also shall Satan appear in human form".³⁹³ It is rather, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem puts it, "Satan uses him as an organ, working in his own person through him".³⁹⁴

But is it in principle possible for the human and angelic natures to unite, not merely through possession, that is, the union of two persons, one human and the other angelic (demonic) under one skin, but *hypostatically*, through the union of two *natures*, one human and the other angelic, in one *person*?

³⁹² St. Seraphim, text supplied by Fr. Victor Potapov; a variant was published in *Liternaturnaia Ucheba*, January-February, 1991, pp. 131-134.

³⁹³ Ambrosiaster, *On II Thessalonians* 2.3.

³⁹⁴ St. Cyril, *Catechetical Discourses* XV,14.

This question was actively discussed by the Fathers in relation to one of the most puzzling passages in Holy Scripture: **And it came to pass when men began to be numerous upon the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the angels of God [or: sons of God], having seen the daughters of men that they were beautiful, took for themselves wives from all whom they chose. And the Lord God said, My Spirit shall certainly not remain among these men for ever, for they are flesh, but their days shall be one hundred and twenty years. Now the giants were upon the earth in those days, and after that the angels of God [sons of God] were wont to enter in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the giants of old, the men of renown.** (Genesis 6.1-5).

The understanding of this passage hinges on the meaning of the word translated “angels of God” or “sons of God” in verses 2 and 4. In the Hebrew Massoretic text the word is bene-ha-elohim, literally “sons of God”. In the Greek translation of the Septuagint, which is the oldest and most authoritative text that we have, the Cambridge text edited by Brooke-McClean has “angels of God” in verse 2, and “sons of God” in verse 4.

P. S. Alexander writes: “The translator has not been inconsistent, for closer inspection shows that, though there are no significant variants at verse 4, a number of important witnesses at verse 2 read, not οι αγγελου του Θεου [the angels of God], but οι υιοι του Θεου [the sons of God]. Moreover, the main support in verse 2 for οι αγγελου του Θεου (viz. Cod. A) has the reading over an erasure. It seems most likely, then, that LXX [the Septuagint] originally read οι υιοι του Θεου □ □ “the sons of God”, in both places. It was later altered, but inconsistently. The literal rendering [i.e. “sons of God”] is found in other Greek texts, as well as in the Vulgate, the Peshitta and the Biblical text of the *Ps-Philonic Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (=LAB).”³⁹⁵

Be that as it may, and even if there is not absolute unanimity concerning which reading is correct, there is complete unanimity, from the earliest Jewish commentators until the early third century, about its meaning. All commentators and writers agree that the reference here is to *angels*. Such an interpretation is supported by the fact that in three passages from Job (1.6, 2.1, 38.7) the phrase “sons of God” certainly refers to angels. Also, the fact that the women gave birth to *giants*³⁹⁶ suggests something abnormal, something more than just a normal human coupling....

We find this interpretation both in pre-Christian Jewish literature - for example, *The Book of Enoch*, *Jubilees*, *The Testament of the 12 Patriarchs*, Philo and Josephus - and in the early Christian Fathers and writers such as Justin the Philosopher, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Methodius of Olympus.

³⁹⁵ Alexander, “The Targumim and Early Exegesis of ‘Sons of God’ in Genesis 6”, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 1972, 23, pp. 60-71.

³⁹⁶ These “giants” are also referred to in Baruch 3.26-28; Sirach 16.7; Wisdom 14.6; Judith 16.7.

Thus Josephus writes: "Now this posterity of Seth continued to esteem God as the Lord of the universe, and to have an entire regard to virtue, for seven generations; but in process of time they were perverted, and forsook the practices of their forefathers, and did neither pay those honours to God which were appointed them, nor had they any concern to do justice towards men; but for what degree of zeal they had formerly shown for virtue, they now showed by their actions a double degree of wickedness, whereby they made God to be their enemy. *For many angels of God accompanied with women, and begat sons* that proved unjust, and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence they had in their own strength; for the tradition is, that these men did what resembled the acts of those whom the Grecians call giants. But Noah was very uneasy at what they did; and being displeased at their conduct, persuaded them to change their disposition, and their actions for the better: but seeing they did not yield to him, but were slaves to wicked pleasures, he was afraid they would kill him, together with his wife and children, and those they had married; so he departed out of the land."³⁹⁷

Again, St. Justin writes: "In ancient times wicked demons appeared and defiled women."³⁹⁸ "[God] committed the care of men and of all things under heaven to angels whom He placed over them. But the angels violated this appointment and were captivated by women and begat children who are called demons."³⁹⁹

Again, Clement of Alexandria writes: "An example for you is the angels who forsook the beauty of God for perishable beauty and fell as far as heaven is from the earth."⁴⁰⁰

Again, St. Methodius writes: "The others remained in the positions for which God made and appointed them; but the devil was insolent, and having conceived envy of us, behaved wickedly in the charge committed to him; as also did those who subsequently were enamoured of fleshly charms, and had illicit intercourse with the daughters of men. For to them also, as was the case with men, God granted the possession of their own choice."⁴⁰¹

Again, St. Irenaeus writes: "And for a very long while wickedness extended and spread, and reached and laid hold upon the whole race of mankind, until a very small seed of righteousness remained among them: and illicit unions took place upon the earth, since angels were united with the daughters of the race of mankind; and they bore to them sons who for their exceeding greatness were called giants. And the angels brought as presents to their wives teachings of wickedness, in that they brought them the virtues of roots and herbs, and dyeing in colours and cosmetics, the discovery of rare substances, love-potions,

³⁹⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, I, 3.

³⁹⁸ St. Justin, *First Apology* V, 2.

³⁹⁹ St. Justin, *Second Apology*, 5.

⁴⁰⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, 3.2.14.

⁴⁰¹ St. Methodius, *Discourse on the Resurrection*, 7.

aversions, amours, concupiscence, constraints of love, spells of bewitchment, and all sorcery and idolatry hateful to God; by the entry of which things into the world evil extended and spread, while righteousness was diminished and enfeebled..."⁴⁰²

According to the patristic scholar J.N.D. Kelly, these angels are referred to in another passage of Holy Scripture, I Peter 3.19: **[Christ] went and preached to the spirits in prison who once upon a time refused obedience when God's patience waited in the days of Noah...**⁴⁰³ Again, we read in II Peter 2.4-5: **If God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into tartarus, and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgement; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah...** Jude says something similar: **And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by Him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgement of the great day** (Jude 6). From the context of these passages, it appears that they are referring to the angels' cohabitation with the daughters of men and their subsequent punishment in hell.

However, in spite of all these early witnesses, the later Fathers from about the second half of the fourth century - including John Chrysostom, Ephraim the Syrian, Blessed Theodoretus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Blessed Jerome and Blessed Augustine - turned sharply against this interpretation, choosing rather to understand the term "sons of God" as denoting the men of the line of Seth, and the "daughters of men" - the women of the line of Cain; so that the event described in Genesis 6 involved an unlawful mixing between the pious and the impious human generations.

Thus St. John Chrysostom writes that it would be "folly to accept such insane blasphemy, saying that an incorporeal and spiritual nature could have united itself to human bodies".⁴⁰⁴

Again, St. Augustine, after noting that "the Septuagint calls them the angels and sons of God", goes on to write: "According to the Hebrew canonical Scriptures [i.e. as opposed to apocrypha such as The Book of Enoch], there is no doubt that there were giants upon the earth before the deluge, and that they were the sons of the men of earth, and citizens of the carnal city, unto which the sons of God, being Seth's in the flesh, forsaking righteousness, adjoined themselves."⁴⁰⁵

Again, St. Ephraim the Syrian writes: "The daughters of Cain adorned themselves and became a snare to the eyes of the sons of Seth... The entire tribe of Seth... was stirred to a frenzy over them... Because the sons of Seth were going in to the daughters of Cain, they turned away from their first wives whom they had previously taken. Then these wives, too, disdained their own

⁴⁰² St. Irenaeus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 18.

⁴⁰³ Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and Jude*, London: A.&C. Black, 969, p. 146.

⁴⁰⁴ St. Chrysostom, *On Genesis* 5:136-7.

⁴⁰⁵ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XV, 23.

continence and now, because of their husbands, quickly began to abandon their modesty, which up until that time they had preserved for their husbands' sake. It is because of this wantonness that assailed both the men and the women, that Scripture says, **All flesh had corrupted its way** (6.13)."⁴⁰⁶

However, St. Ambrose of Milan reverts to the earlier, pre-Nicene tradition, writing: "'The giants (Nephilim) were on earth in those days.' The author of the divine Scripture... asserts that those whom he defines with such a name because of the extraordinary size of their body were generated by angels and women."⁴⁰⁷

To the later, post-Nicene line of interpretation belong the words of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow: "According to the text of the Alexandrian Bible, [the words are] 'Angels of God'. Lactantius is of this opinion, as are many ancient authors. Justin affirms that from the marriages of Angels with the daughters of men there came demons. Athenagoras ascribes the fall of the Angels to these same marriages, and it was from them that the giants came. Tertullian ascribes to these Angels the acquisition of Astrology, precious stones, metals and some female adornments. But all these traditions contradict the witness of Jesus Christ, that **the Angels do not marry** (Matthew 22.30)...

"According to the opinion of the most recent interpreters, [the sons of God are] the descendants of the race of *Shem*, who not only were *sons of God by grace* (cf. Deuteronomy 14.1; I John 3.1), but they also probably formed a society under this name (cf. Genesis 4.26)⁴⁰⁸ which was opposed to the society of *the sons of men*, that is, the descendants of *Cain*, who were led only by their fallen human nature. Moses ascribes the beginning of the mixing of such contrary societies to the fascination with the *beauty* of the daughters of men; and as a consequence even those who belonged to the society of those who walk in the Spirit became **flesh**, and light itself began to be turned into darkness."⁴⁰⁹

[3. Demons, Women and UFOs](#)

However, even if we exclude the possibility of a *real, hypostatic* union between angels (demons) and men, it is another question whether demons may not *desire* such a union and *strive* for it.

But why should they wish to unite with women? First, because demons, though bodiless, are possessed by bodily lust.⁴¹⁰ In this connection the words of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 11.10 are relevant: **For this cause ought the**

⁴⁰⁶ St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis*, 6.3. Quoted in Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 2000, p. 244.

⁴⁰⁷ St. Ambrose, *On Noah*, 4.8.

⁴⁰⁸ According to Aquila's translation, this verse reads: "Then they began to be called by the name of the Lord" - that is, "sons of God". Cf. Metropolitan Philaret, *Notes leading to a fundamental understanding of the Book of Genesis*, Moscow, 1867, p. 100 (in Russian).

⁴⁰⁹ Metropolitan Philaret, *Notes*, op. cit., p. 108.

⁴¹⁰ Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov, "On Orthodoxy".

woman to have authority on her head on account of the angels. Commenting on this passage, St. Paulinus of Nola writes: "Let them realize why Paul ordered their heads to be clothed with a more abundant covering: it is because of the angels, that is, the angels who are ready to seduce them and whom the saints will condemn."⁴¹¹

And if this seems fantastical, let us pay heed to very recent reports that some women (usually with a spiritistic past) claim in all seriousness to sleep with "ghosts" who look like men but whom we can confidently call demons. Women who are dissatisfied with their human lovers seem able to "summon" these "ghosts", who are all too happy to satisfy their desires...⁴¹²

A second reason is that Satan almost certainly wishes to imitate the union of the two natures in one Person which Christ achieved at His incarnation, only substituting the demonic nature for the Divine, a whore for the Virgin Mother of God, and the Antichrist for Christ. Such a motive is suggested by the fact, emphasised by many of the Fathers, that the Antichrist will seek to imitate Christ in all things. And if in all things, why not in his very birth?

Let us recall the prophecies of Saints Nilus and Seraphim that the conception of the Antichrist will be through a technique of artificial insemination, whereby the devil will seize and possess the sperm before it has reached the mother's egg. Since the technique will be artificial insemination, rather than the normal process of sexual intercourse, the mother will be able to claim - falsely, of course - that she is a "virgin". And since artificial insemination takes place in a test-tube, outside both human bodies, the possibilities for possession and genetic manipulation of the sperm by the devil will be maximised.

Moreover, having taken possession of the sperm before it fertilises the egg, the devil will be able to claim that he is the father of the Antichrist "from eternity" - or, at any rate, before the human father could beget him. Then the Antichrist will be, according to the demonic anti-theology, one person in two natures - from a bodiless father before he became man, and from a virgin mother at the moment of conception...

Could the demons already be experimenting on the union of the human and demonic natures? After all, the technique of artificial insemination already exists. Moreover, "genetic engineering", and the union of human and animal species, is already well advanced in human laboratories⁴¹³ - undoubtedly under the direct influence of demons.

⁴¹¹ St. Paulinus, *Letter 23: To Severus*.

⁴¹² Jill Foster, "The women who say they've had affairs with GHOSTS: They're not mad, but respectable twenty-somethings who say spooks are better lovers than real men", *Daily Mail* (London), November 13, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3317895/The-women-say-ve-affairs-GHOSTS-not-mad-respectable-twenty-somethings-say-spooks-better-lovers-real-men.html#ixzz3rU7dXHs6>

⁴¹³ Alok Jha, "First British human-animal hybrid embryos created by scientists", *The Guardian*, April 2, 2008,

But the participation of demons may be more direct than that; for it is not just deluded human beings who are attempting to change and manipulate and hybridise the nature of man... According to reputable Orthodox writers, such as Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, the inhabitants of the so-called "Unidentified Flying Objects" (UFOs), which have so struck the popular imagination in recent decades, are in fact demons.⁴¹⁴ Other writers have seen a parallel between the phenomenon of the UFOs coming to earth and the story of the visitation of the daughters of men by the son of God in Genesis 6, which produced the hybrid offspring of the "giants", "watchers" or "fallen ones".⁴¹⁵

Moreover, according to the Harvard Professor of Psychiatry, John Mack, there is now well established evidence that men and women have been abducted onto UFOs, where their alien "hosts", i.e. demons, have performed sexual experiments upon them. There have been reported cases of matings between demons and human beings on board these craft. But still more sinister, sperm has been taken from men, and ova from women. "Fertilized eggs, which may have been genetically altered, are implanted, and later there is the eventual removal of the pregnancy. In subsequent abductions, experiencers are shown hybrid offspring and may even be asked to hold or nurture them."⁴¹⁶

These ideas indicate how Genesis 6.1-5, modern experiments on human sexuality and reproduction (by both humans and demons) and the doctrine of the Antichrist, may come together in a fantastic, nightmarish scenario that nevertheless has the stamp of reality. Moved by envy, lust and jealousy, the devil, the enemy of mankind, has from primordial times tried to interfere with, corrupt, abuse and radically subvert human nature. And just as Christ recreated human nature in the image and likeness of God by becoming incarnate of the Virgin Mother of God, so the devil wishes to recreate it in *his* image and likeness by becoming incarnate of a pseudo-virgin, the mother of the Antichrist.

However, *real* demonic incarnation, the creation of a true demon-man, is impossible because of the bounds between species and kinds of rational beings created by God. So Satan resorts to as close an imitation as possible: through the demonic possession of human seed even before conception, and its genetic manipulation to accentuate the worst qualities in fallen human nature, he plans to create, if not a true demon-man, at any rate the demonic man par excellence. But since, unlike God, he cannot create out of nothing or at once, he requires time and experimentation, in order gradually, by trial and error, to "work out"

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2008/apr/02/medicalresearch.ethicsofscience?gusrc=rss&feed=networkfront>

⁴¹⁴ Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, Platina: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1990, chapter 6. See also David Ritchie, "UFOs: The Demonic Connection", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 43, no. 2, March-April, 1993, pp. 18-37; Archbishop Chrysostomos, "Alien Abductions and the Orthodox Christian", *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. XIV, 1997, pp. 57-62.

⁴¹⁵ See Andrew Collins, *From the Ashes of the Angels*, London: Penguin Books, 1997, p. 371.

⁴¹⁶ Mack, *Abduction*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994, p. 394.

his perverted masterpiece. For, as Fr. Justin Popovich writes: “The Antichrist will be, as it were, an incarnation of the devil, for Christ is the incarnation of God...”⁴¹⁷

Conclusion

Let us go back to Genesis. It will be recalled that almost immediately after the attempt of the “sons of God” to seduce the daughters of men, and the birth from these unions of giants, there came the universal flood which swept away all mankind except Noah and his family. Whether or not there is a direct causal connection between the two events is not indicated: but their close proximity is very suggestive. Now in the New Testament the Lord said: **As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all** (Luke 17.26-27). The period we are living through now appears very similar to the period the Lord was speaking about, and so also to the period just before the Flood. Now, as then, men have begun to multiply on the earth, and now, as then, the condition of mankind is one of spiritual and moral degeneration.

But could the correspondence between the Old and the New Testaments be even closer here? Could it be that just as the universal flood and the destruction of the old world was brought about by an unnatural union of demons and men and the consequent birth of giants, so the Second Coming of Christ and the burning up of the material universe at His Coming will be brought about by an unnatural union of Satan and a woman and the consequent birth of the Antichrist? Could it be that just as in Genesis a terrible corruption of human nature led to the end of the “old world”, with only one family being saved in Noah’s ark, so a still more terrible corruption of human nature and blasphemy against God in our time will lead to the end also of our “brave new world”, with only a tiny remnant of righteous men being saved in the Ark of the Church?

We cannot prevent the birth of the Antichrist, **for the Scriptures must be fulfilled** (Mark 14.49). But we can delay his appearing by living a godly life and by being keenly aware, through a knowledge of the Scriptures, of the snares of the devil. And we must be aware above all that the human spirit, being free and under the protection of God for as long as it seeks it, is not subject to the flesh, however corrupted, manipulated and even demon-possessed it may be. The Lord said of the last times: **except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved** (Matthew 24.22). But He also said of His sheep: **They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand** (John 10.28)...

⁴¹⁷ Popovich, *Interpretation of the Epistles of St. John the Theologian*, Munich, 2000, p. 36 (in Russian).

April 24 / May 7, 2004; revised March 20 / April 2, 2008, December 31 /
January 13, 2008/2009, June 7/20, 2010, November 2/15, 2015 and February
24 / March 7, 2016.

26. CREATION OUT OF NOTHING

Lear. This is nothing, fool.
Fool. Then, like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer, you gave me nothing for't.
Can you make no use of nothing, uncle?
Lear. Why no, boy. Nothing can be made of nothing.
King Lear IV, 4, 122-6.

It is the simplest, most obvious and yet, for the pagans in modern as in ancient times, most *unexpected* of the truths proclaimed by Christianity: that the world was created *out of nothing*. "The idea of Creation," writes Fr. Georges Florovsky, "was an unexpected philosophical discovery made by Christianity. For the Greek consciousness even the very posing of the question de rerum originatione radicali [on the origin of the world] was foreign and incomprehensible. The Hellenes were completely in the power of ideas about the Eternal Cosmos, whose structure was static, and whose basic elements were unchanging. This Cosmos simply *was*. Its existence was necessarily perceived as a datum [given], as a primitive fact that neither thought nor imagination could explain... The question of the 'origin' or 'beginning of existence' of the world was simply meaningless..."⁴¹⁸

However, modern cosmology, that most speculative and insubstantial of sciences, - if it can be called science at all, since it is *completely and in principle unverifiable*, - wars with ferocious persistence against the idea of creation out of nothing. For a long time, it accepted the steady state theory of the universe, according to which, as in ancient paganism, the world always was and always will be, without beginning or end. But then came the shattering discovery - if it is a genuine discovery, which cannot be proved - that the universe is expanding. This changed everything. For if the universe is expanding, then there must have been a *beginning* of its expansion, a point of origin. This destroyed the steady state theory and necessitated the hypothesis of a big bang, some 13.8 billion years ago, a point zero beyond which there was - nothing.

Now human thought, both scientific (in the Big Bang Theory) and commonsensical and religious, sees the history of the universe as going back to a first cause. For if there were no first cause, there would be nothing to set the causal nexus going. However, the first cause must be in some sense outside the causal nexus taken as a whole; and so it must itself be uncaused (and immaterial and non-spatiotemporal). Otherwise, if it were part of the causal nexus, it would itself require a causal explanation. This is recognized by religious thought, which calls God the Uncaused Cause and "Beginning of all beginnings". But modern cosmological thought cannot accept this. If it accepts a first cause, it is only in the sense of the first of the causes, the big bang itself. It cannot accept that the big bang itself must have a cause.

⁴¹⁸ Florovsky, "Poniatie Tvorenia u Sviatitelia Afanasia Velikogo" (The Concept of Creation in St. Athanasius the Great), in *Dogmat i Istoria* (Dogma and History), Moscow, 1998, pp. 80, 81.

David Berlinski, a distinguished American academic with qualifications in the fields of physics, mathematics, biology and philosophy who is also a secular Jew and an agnostic, writes: "The universe, orthodox cosmologists believe, came into existence [about 13.8 billion years ago] as the expression of an explosion - what is now called the Big Bang. The word *explosion* is a sign that words have failed us, as they so often do, for it suggests a humanly comprehensible event - a *gigantic* explosion or a *stupendous* eruption. But this is absurd. The Big Bang was not an event taking place at a time or in a place. Space and time were themselves created by the Big Bang, the measure along with the measured..."

"If the Big Bang expresses a new idea in physics, it suggests an old idea in thought: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*. This unwelcome juxtaposition of physical and biblical ideas persuaded the astrophysicist Fred Hoyle, an ardent atheist [and believer in the steady state theory], to dismiss the Big Bang after he had named it. In this he was not alone. Many physicists have found the idea that the universe had a beginning alarming. 'So long as the universe had a beginning,' Stephen Hawking has written 'we could suppose it had a creator.' *God forbid!*..

"For more than a century, physicists had taken a manful pride in the fact that theirs was a discipline that celebrated the weird, the bizarre, the unexpected, the mind-bending, and the recondite. Here was a connection that any intellectual primitive could at once grasp: The universe had a beginning, thus something must have caused it to happen. Where would physics be, physicists asked themselves, if we had paid the slightest attention to the obvious?...

"If both theory and evidence suggested that the universe had a beginning, it was natural for physicists to imagine that by tweaking the evidence and adjusting the theory, they could get rid of what they did not want [God]. Perhaps the true and the good universe - the one without a beginning - might be reached by skirting the Big Bang singularity, or bouncing off it in some way? But in the mid-1960s, Roger Penrose and Stephen Hawking demonstrated that insofar as the backward contraction of the universe was controlled by the equations of general relativity almost all lines of conveyance came to an end.

"The singularity was inescapable.

"This conclusion encouraged the theologians but did little to ease physicists in their own minds, for while it strengthened the unwholesome conclusion that Big Bang cosmology had already established, it left a good deal else in a fog. In many ways, this was the worst of all possible worlds. Religious believers had emerged from their seminars well satisfied with what they could understand; the physicists themselves could understand nothing very well.

"The fog that attended the Penrose-Hawking singularity theorems (there is more than one) arose spontaneously whenever physicists tried to determine

just what the singularity signified. At the singularity itself, a great many physical parameters zoom to infinity. Just what is one to make of infinite temperature? Or particles that are no distance from one another? The idea of a singularity, as the astronomer Joseph Silk observed, is ‘completely unacceptable as a physical description of the universe... An infinitely dense universe [is] where the laws of physics, and even space and time, break down.’⁴¹⁹

The Big Bang theory posits a beginning state of the universe that is contrary to the laws of physics. In other words, it is physically impossible. This is an enormous problem for atheist physics, which assumes the law-governed nature of all things, while rejecting a law-giver, but not for traditional religious thought, which recognizes a Law-giver as well as the law. For if God is the Cause of the entire spatio-temporal universe, then the causality joining God to the universe, as it were, must itself be beyond space and time and not subject to physical laws. For this is not the link between a material cause and a material effect, which expresses a physical law, but the link between the Creator and the whole of His physical creation, that is, all material causes and effects taken together as a single system.

Berlinski argues that the fact that “causes in nature come to an end” shows that “the hypothesis of God’s existence and the facts of contemporary cosmology are *consistent*.”⁴²⁰ However, in order for God’s existence and the supposed facts of contemporary cosmology to be consistent, more is required. First, the assumptions of contemporary physics must be changed in order that the “completely unacceptable” in physical terms may become acceptable. Secondly, we must be assured that cosmology has truly reached the end of its development. That is, we must be sure that the Big Bang theory is its final word, and that physicists will not revert to some new version of, for example, the Steady State theory that sees the universe as infinite and without beginning or end. For while God has said that “heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall never pass away”, this cannot be said about the ever-changing words of physicists. And this is a good thing at the present time. For while the currently fashionable Big Bang theory appears closer in some ways to traditional religious thought than some of its predecessors, the general project of universal evolutionism from Big Bang to Homo Sapiens is still very far from consistent, not only with many scientifically established facts, but also with the Divine Cosmology – that is, God’s own record of His work of creation.

Why does the universe exist at all? “Oxford’s Peters Atkins has attempted to address this issue. ‘If we are to be honest,’ he argues, ‘then we have to accept that science will be able to claim complete success only if it achieves what many might think impossible: accounting for the emergence of everything from absolutely nothing.’ Atkins does not seem to recognize that when the human

⁴¹⁹ Berlinski, *The Devil’s Delusion: Atheism and its Scientific Pretensions*, New York: Basic Books, 2009, pp. 69, 70-71, 78-79.

⁴²⁰ Berlinski, p. 80.

mind encounters the thesis that something has emerged from nothing, it is not encountering a question to which any coherent answer exists. His confidence that a scientific answer must nonetheless be forthcoming needs to be assessed in other terms, possibly those involving clinical self-delusion."⁴²¹

The theologians say that God created the universe out of nothing; the physicists say that it "emerged" from nothing. The first explanation has much more to commend it than the second, because while we cannot know how God created everything out of nothing, the idea itself is nevertheless comprehensible, first because the idea of a Creator Who is incomprehensible to His creatures is quite comprehensible, and secondly because God is at any rate something and not nothing. It also has the advantage that it provides possible answers to the question "Why?" in the sense of "For what purpose?" We can say, for example, that God created the universe because his nature is love, and He wants creatures to exist in order to share in His love. The second explanation, however, not only provides no conceivable answer to the questions "How?" and "Why". It is itself nonsensical. For out of nothing nothing can come...

Physicists nevertheless continue to issue statements insisting that the "nothing" out of which the universe appears to emerge is in fact something, such as: "'The actual Universe probably derived from an indeterminate sea of potentiality that we call the quantum vacuum, whose properties may always remain beyond our current understanding.'...

"The Sea of Indeterminate Potentiality, and all cognate concepts, belong to a group of physical arguments with two aims. The first is to find a way around the initial singularity of standard Big Bang cosmology. Physicists accept this aim devoutly because the Big Bang singularity strikes an uncomfortably theistic note. Nothing but intellectual mischief can result from leaving that singularity where it is. Who knows what poor ideas religious believers might take from cosmology were they to imagine that in the beginning the universe began?

"The second aim is to account for the emergence of the universe in some way that will allow physicists to say with quiet pride that they have gotten the thing to appear from nothing, and especially nothing resembling a deity *or* a singularity."⁴²²

In other words, nothing can be induced to come out of nothing if the original nothing can be redefined as nothing *actually*, but something *potentially*. However, it is difficult to understand how a potential something which does not actually exist is in any better position to explain the emergence of *everything*. For "beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better" (Hebrews 7.7), and the lesser can only be created by, or emerge from, that which

⁴²¹ Berlinski, pp. 95-96.

⁴²² Berlinski, pp. 96, 97-98.

is greater than itself. God is great, and by definition greater than everything that He has created. But that which is only potentially real is lesser than that which is actually real, and so the latter cannot be said to owe its existence to the former.

Another problem with things that are things only *potentially* is that there is no way of telling what kind of thing they will *actually* become. The possibilities are literally infinite. And one interpretation of quantum physics is that when the sea of potential being – also called “the wave function of the universe” – comes up against an observer, it “collapses” into a multitude of universes, or a “multiverse”.

Of course, the question then arises: who could this observer be? But that would be too embarrassing to ask the extremely embarrassed cosmologists. So let us continue to examine their idea...

Thus “according to the many-worlds interpretation, at precisely the moment a measurement is made, the universe branches into two or more universes... The new universes cluttering up creation embody the quantum states that were previously in a state of quantum superposition...”

“The wave function of the universe is designed to represent the behavior of the universe – *all of it*. It floats in the void – these metaphors are inescapable – and passes judgement on universes. Some are probable, others are likely, and still others a very bad bet. Nevertheless, the wave function of the universe cannot be seen, measured, assessed, or tested. It is a purely theoretical artifact.”⁴²³

And so: “Quantum cosmology is a branch of mathematical metaphysics. It provides no cause for the emergence of the universe, and so does not answer the first cosmological question [how?], and it offers no reason for the existence of the universe, and so does not address the second [why?]. If the mystification induced by its modest mathematics were removed from the subject, what remains does not appear appreciably different in kind from various creation myths in which the origin of the universe is attributed to sexual congress between primordial deities.”⁴²⁴

We come to the conclusion that after veering towards something in some respects resembling traditional Judaeo-Christian religion in the Big Bang theory, cosmology appears now, without abandoning the concept of the Big Bang, to have to have veered off in a quite different direction – towards a sophisticated form of Hinduism, whose creation myth tells of a quasi-sexual explosion of multiple seeds of universes through the union of Brahma, “the germ of all being”, with his consort Saraswathi. For is not “the sea of indeterminate probability” or “wave function of the universe” a kind of

⁴²³ Berlinski, pp. 99-100.

⁴²⁴ Berlinski, pp. 106-107.

modern version of “the germ of all being”, which explodes out of potential being into a multitude of actual universes after coming into contact with an observer? (And, as we asked before, who could this observer be if not God?) It looks as if the physicists have regressed even further into the mists of magical, pre-scientific paganism.

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There is profound paradox in this playing with nothingness. On the one hand, our human nature abhors a vacuum. We know we are *something*, and therefore we can relate only to *something else*. And instinctively we gravitate to a something else that is higher than us, that can explain who we are and why we are here and reassure us that we will not return to nothingness, but will attain a depth and solidity of being that will never end. Nihilism can satisfy neither the mind nor the heart.

On the other hand, it is precisely the teaching that God created the world out of nothing that satisfies our craving for being as opposed to nothingness. For if we are created out of something, then we are no more than that something – just atoms and electrons governed by senseless laws that create no room for freedom or morality or truth or beauty. In Macbeth’s words, our life is no more than “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing” ... If on the other hand, we are created out of nothing, then we know that there is a Something that can create out of nothing, Who is more than atoms and electrons, Who creates laws but is above all laws, Whose freedom is the guarantee and source of our freedom, Whose truth and beauty and goodness allow us to believe in truth and beauty and goodness and to partake in it ourselves... And this is a source of great joy.

For, as Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. This world is not of itself, just as nothing in this world is of itself, neither is this world of an evil power, neither is this world of many creators, good and evil, but rather it is of the one gracious God.

“This answer evokes joy in the heart of every man and incites him to good works. And by this we know, among other things, that this is the only correct and true answer.

“Every other answer, in contradiction to this, evokes sorrow and fear in us and incites us to evil works, and therefore we know, among other things, that such answers are false.

“Brethren, the world is from God - let us rejoice and be glad! The world is of divine origin, and consequently its end will also be in God. The world is of a good root, and consequently it will bring forth good fruit. It proceeded from the chamber of light, and it will end in light.

“When we know that the beginning is good, then we know that it tends toward good and that the end will be good. Behold, in these words about the beginning, the prophecy about the end is already hidden. As was the beginning, so also will be the end. He from Whom the beginning came, in Him also is the end.

“Therefore, let us hold fast to this saving truth, that we may have shining hope and be strengthened in love toward the One Who, out of love, created us.

“O Lord God, our Almighty Creator, One God, One Creator, the good Source of goodness, Thee do we worship, to Thee do we pray; direct us to the good end by Thy Holy Spirit, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

“To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.”⁴²⁵

*December 1/14, 2015.
St. Philaret of New York.*

⁴²⁵ Bishop Nikolai, *The Prologue from Ochrid*.

27. MOSCOW'S HOLY WARS

Over a year ago, Patriarch Cyril (Gundiaev) of Moscow declared that the war in Ukraine was “sacred”, and that Orthodoxy there was being persecuted by “uniates and schismatics”.⁴²⁶ “With the beginning of hostilities,” he said, “the uniates and schismatics, having been given arms, under the pretext of antiterrorist operations, have begun outright aggression against the clergy of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the east of the country” ...⁴²⁷ Since then, the war in Ukraine has not gone so well for Putin and Gundiaev - brothers, not in Christ, but in the KGB-FSB. However, the KGB cannot exist without war; its whole function is, was and shall be to conquer the world for the KGB, which has now renamed itself “Holy Russia” and “the Third Rome” in order to deceive the more gullible Orthodox. So they looked round for another “holy war”, and they found one in Syria... That makes three “holy wars” in five years: the first two against Orthodox states, Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, and the third against the Sunni Muslims of ISIS and Turkey. Where will it all end? And is there anything holy in any of them?

1. Uniates and Schismatics

The KGB now controls Russia more completely than ever before. In Soviet times there were three centres of power in Russia: the Party, the Army and the KGB. Now there is only one: the KGB. Thus all leading posts, and 70% of the bureaucracy, are filled by KGB men.

In case anyone should have any illusions about the real nature of the KGB that rules Russia today, Vitaly Portnikov writes: “One of the high-ranking Chekists [KGB agents] once said to me with a sigh that after the liquidation of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the KGB’s graduates, convinced that now that the Party had ‘evaporated’, all power and all financial flow belonged only to them, came into conflict with the powerful force of the criminal world. Now it has become possible to confirm that the Chekists did not begin to struggle against the criminal world in the way that they struggled against the Party apparatus for so many years. They preferred to become part of this criminal world, because the basic aims of the Chekists and the criminals – power and money – completely coincide. And all the rest - the beautiful slogans about ‘the Third Rome’ getting up from its knees, ‘Sacred Crimea’, ‘Ukrainian fascists’, all the adventures in Georgia, the Donbass or in Syria – are a smoke screen, designed to hide from the Russians and the whole of the rest of the world the simple and boring truth – that Russia is ruled by bandits. Not in a

⁴²⁶ Ekaterina Schetkina, “Настоящая цель провокативного обращения Патриарха Кирилла”, 19 August, 2014, <http://uainfo.org/blognews/377064-nastoyaschaya-cel-provokativnogo-obrascheniya-patriarha-kirilla.html>.

⁴²⁷ <http://www.echo.msk.ru/blog/expertmus/1382105-echo/>

figurative or insulting sense of the word, but in the most literal, professional sense.”⁴²⁸

Having established that absolutely basic, axiomatic fact about Russia today, let us be clear about another fact: there is no persecution of Orthodoxy as such in Eastern Ukraine. The seizure of the Crimea was pure banditry, in violation of the international agreement on the Ukraine signed by Russia in 1994 and accomplished, as Putin now admits (he denied it at first), by Russian special forces. Russia invaded the Crimea and Donbass on the excuse that they were being overrun by “Banderovtsy”, that is, West Ukrainian uniates.⁴²⁹ Although Ukrainian nationalist uniaticism exists, its influence both on the Maidan revolution and on present events in the East has been grossly exaggerated. Right-wing nationalists won about 4% of the vote in the recent presidential elections – in other Balkan Orthodox countries, their share of the electorate is probably much higher. In Russia, experts claim there are 53 neo-Nazi organizations, and Russian neo-Nazis are fighting in Eastern Ukraine.⁴³⁰

As for the Ukrainian President Poroshenko, he is not a uniatic. All the evidence suggests that he is a “normal” Orthodox believer; at least until recently he regularly attended services in the Moscow Patriarchate, and even served in the altar. It is very unlikely that he would want to prosecute a war against his co-religionists for religious reasons. Moreover, Poroshenko has the support of the majority of the Ukrainian Orthodox hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate, who have conspicuously not followed the warlike rhetoric of their patriarch (which is not to say that some of them may not have secret or not-so-secret sympathies with Moscow). This has brought them closer to the other large group of Ukrainian Orthodox, the Kievan Patriarchate (KP) but distanced them from their titular head in Moscow.

For it is the KP that Patriarch Cyril really has in mind when speaking about “schismatics”. What he fears above all is that the Ukrainian Orthodox should come within the sphere of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who looks

⁴²⁸ Portnikov, “Политики в законе: кто на самом деле руководит современной Россией”, *Glavred*, 15 December, 2015, http://glavred.info/avtorskie_kolonki/politiki-v-zakone-kto-na-samom-dele-rukovodit-sovremennoy-rossiey-348891.html

⁴²⁹ Stepan Bander was head of the “Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists”, and fought for Ukrainian independence against both the Poles and the Soviets. He collaborated for a while with the Nazis, but was also imprisoned by them. His organization struggled against Soviet power for some years after the end of World War II, and one historian claims that it was co-opted by MI6. In 1959 he was assassinated in Munich by a KGB agent. “Putin welcomed the annexation of Crimea by Russia by declaring that he ‘was saving them from the new Ukrainian leaders who are the ideological heirs of Bandera, Hitler’s accomplice during World War II’. Pro-Russian activists claimed ‘Those people in Kiev are Bandera-following Nazi collaborators’. And Ukrainians living in Russia complained of being labelled a ‘Banderite’ (even when they were from parts of Ukraine where Bandera has no popular support). Groups who do idolize Bandera did take part in the Euromaidan protests, but were a minority element.” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stepan_Bandera#cite_note-B2014ICCPRIU-10)

⁴³⁰ “[Russian neo-Nazis in the ranks of terrorists in Eastern Ukraine](http://euromaidanpress.com/2014/08/18/russian-neo-nazis-in-the-ranks-of-terrorists-in-eastern-ukraine/)” <http://euromaidanpress.com/2014/08/18/russian-neo-nazis-in-the-ranks-of-terrorists-in-eastern-ukraine/>

back to the time (before 1686) when the whole of the Ukraine was under the jurisdiction of Constantinople. This contest for power over the Ukraine between Moscow and Constantinople is bedeviling preparations for the “Pan-Orthodox Council” slated for May, 2016.

So what has Patriarch Cyril gained so far by his belligerent “holy war” rhetoric? A steady stream of priests and parishes from the Ukrainian MP into other Ukrainian Orthodox Churches. In fact, he has prepared the ground for a very large schism in his own Church, in what he calls “canonical Orthodoxy”! For it is precisely those parishioners of his own Church living in the Ukraine who, as Ekaterina Schetkina writes, “are probably suffering the bitterest disillusionment. They have really lost a lot in this war. They have been accustomed to think of themselves as part of a huge Church that cares for them as a mother. But she has used them as nothing more than spare change. As an excuse for political interference and even military invasion. And now she is also urging them on to ‘exploits’ and ‘martyrdom’. That would be okay if it were for the sake of the faith – but no, it is for the sake of another geopolitical chimera.”⁴³¹

We may ask: when, not so very long ago, there was a very real persecution of Orthodoxy, not in some foreign country, but in his own Soviet fatherland, did Patriarch Cyril raise his voice in protest and call for a “holy war” against the persecutors? Absolutely not! On the contrary, he, together with all his fellow-hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate, denied the very existence of the persecution and even slandered those who courageously asserted it, sending them on their way to prison with a wave of his all-holy, rolex-encrusted hand! Just recently, Metropolitan Barsanuphius of St. Petersburg declared that the Soviet camps were “like resorts”.⁴³²

Again, we may ask: as he laments the sufferings of his flock in the Ukraine – caused entirely by the successors of those KGB colleagues of his who persecuted Russian Orthodoxy for most of the twentieth century, – has Patriarch Cyril donated any of his vast fortune – calculated some years ago at \$4 billion – to the relief of these sufferings? No word of such generosity has reached us. What we have heard, however, is that Cyril considers the sanctions regime that his flock will now have to suffer because of his “holy war” to be a good opportunity for “belt-tightening” (something which the slim-line hierarchs of the patriarchate will certainly not be inclined to do)!

Another question for his All-Holiness: if he is so worried about the invasion of “uniates” into Eastern Ukraine, why has he become a de facto uniate himself? Cyril’s enthusiasm for the Roman Catholic heresy is not a recent fad. His mentor, the notorious Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad, as well as being

⁴³¹ Ekaterina Schetkina, “Святейшее разочарование”, <http://gazeta.zn.ua/internal/svyateyshee-razocharovanie-.html>, August 21, 2014.

⁴³² “Митрополит РПЦ сравнил сталинские лагеря с курортом”, *Politsovet*, December 14, 2015, <http://politsovet.ru/50593-mitropolit-rpc-sravnit-stalinskie-lagerya-s-kurortom.html>.

KGB Agent “Sviatoslav”, was a secret Catholic bishop, who died as a Catholic at the feet of Pope John-Paul I in 1978.⁴³³

Cyril has zealously continued the pro-Catholic orientation of his mentor. Together with the head of the Department of External Relations, Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), he has courted the Pope hardly less fervently than his rival for the Pope’s affections, the Ecumenical Patriarch; each hopes to be the number two to the Pope after the New Church Order is proclaimed in the wake of the Eighth Ecumenical Council. Putin has supported his brother-chekist’s advances by visiting the Vatican (and keeping the Pope waiting) and supporting his ecumenical initiatives. For it must be remembered that it was the KGB that propelled the Moscow Patriarchate into the ecumenical movement in the early 1960s with the aim of infiltrating the West through its ever-gullible churchmen. Moreover, Cyril has shown no less zeal for Protestant ecumenism: at the 1991 General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, he not only took part in the common prayers with members of all kinds of religions, but called the WCC “our common home”!

So any idea that Gundiaev is somehow “defending Orthodoxy” can be dismissed immediately – even if he himself were truly Orthodox in his faith, which he is not. Like every Soviet patriarch since Sergius Stragorodsky, he has been defending only the interests of the purely secular organization to which he owes his first loyalty. For, as Putin likes to say, “once a chekist – always a chekist”.

[2. Muslims and Terrorists](#)

Although Putin claims that his military venture into the Middle East is only “temporary”, to save the Christians of the area from ISIS and other terrorists, all the indications (for example, from the fortifications surrounding the military base at Latakia) are that his aim is a more permanent occupation. Besides, the logic of the system of alliances he is building up points to a strategy that has nothing to do with the purely propaganda slogan of defending Christianity. He is allying himself essentially with *Shiite Islam* – the Shiite States of Iran, Iraq and Syria⁴³⁴ – against *Sunni Islam* – the Sunni States of Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

⁴³³ Serge Keleher, *Passion and Resurrection – the Greek Catholic Church in Soviet Ukraine, 1939-1989*, Stauropegion, L’viv, 1993, pp. 101-102. Cf. *The Tablet*, March 20, 1993. Recently, writes Ludmilla Perepiolkina, “the Catholic Journal *Truth and Life* published the memoirs of Miguel Arranz, in which this Jesuit, who in Nicodemus’ time taught at the Leningrad Theological Academy, told, among other things, that with Nicodemus’ blessing he celebrated ‘the Eastern Rite Liturgy’ in Nicodemus’ house church at the Leningrad Theological Academy.” (*Ecumenism – A Path to Perdition*, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 276, note).

⁴³⁴ The Syrian regime is not strictly Shiite, but Alawite. However, the very strange Alawite religion is essentially branch of Shiite Islam, according to Wikipedia: “The **Alawites**, also known as **Alawis** (‘*Alawīyyah*’ **Arabic**: علوية), are an Islamic sect, centered in **Syria**, who follow a very highly contested and controversial branch of the **Twelver** school of **Shia Islam** but with **syncretistic** elements” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alawites>)

Already in August, 2013 Putin declared that he wanted to “destroy” Saudi Arabia; and since then the Saudis’ policy of flooding the market with oil so as to lower the world oil price and drastically reduce Russia’s oil revenues must have enraged Russia’s billionaire rulers. Putin has to act against the Saudis in order to restore the shaky Russian economy, already damaged by western sanctions – and, most important for him personally, to see off potential rivals to his leadership. Besides, important new fossil fuel reserves have been found off the Syrian and Israeli coasts. If these reserves were to fall into the hands of western companies, Russia’s economy would go into free-fall. Almost certainly, this puts Putin on a collision course also with *Israel*, which fears a threat to its very existence from Iran and its satellite, Hizbollah...

These are the real springs of Russian foreign policy, whose basic aims, let us remind ourselves, are money and power. Religion has nothing to do with it. Like Napoleon and Hitler, Putin has a purely instrumental attitude to religion. He recognizes that it is an important element in very many people’s lives, especially in the Muslim world, and an important stabilizing and motivating factor in Russia. So he *pretends* to be religious, extending vast financial privileges to his fellow-bandits from the Moscow Patriarchate, currying favour among Russia’s Muslims to the extent of attending the opening of a vast new mosque in Moscow, and even donning a skull cap and praying at the Weeping Wall in Jerusalem.

He is an ecumenist, not by conviction (what convictions can a bandit have?!), but by purely political calculation. Of course, this leads him into flagrant contradictions. He cannot claim to be the champion of the One True Faith of Orthodoxy against the infidel Western heresies while at the same time praising the false faith of Islam to the skies. In this flagrant inconsistency he is followed, of course, by his puppet-slaves in the Moscow Patriarchate. Patriarch Cyril is *so* respectful of the false prophet Mohammed!

[3. Beating the Drums of War](#)

Protopriest Vsevolod Chaplin, spokesman of the Moscow Patriarchate, recently said on "Moscow Echo" radio: "If society lives in conditions of relative peace - calm, satiety - for a certain number of decades, two or three, it may live them in conditions of worldliness. Nobody will go and die for the market or democracy, but the necessity of dying for society and its future will arise sooner or later. Peace does not last long. Peace will not last long now, glory to God. Why do I say "Glory to God"? A society in which life is too sated and calm, without problems, a comfortable life - is a society abandoned by God, such a society will not live long. The balance between worldliness and religiosity will probably be corrected by God Himself, who intervenes in history and sends sufferings. Sufferings that in this case will be beneficial. Because they permit those who have become too accustomed to living quietly, calmly and in comfort to come to their senses. They have to live in another way."

This is a dangerous half-truth. Many writers (Dostoyevsky, for example) have pointed out that war can be a cleansing process - a cure for the sins

amassed during peace. But only under certain conditions. War undertaken in obedience to a legitimate ruler for a just cause is beneficial, like all obedience to true authorities. But war undertaken out of slavish submission to a false authority for evil ends benefits nobody. The only benefit that could come out of such a war is that the evil regime that started it is swept aside making possible a regeneration of the state and society. In other words, such a war can be beneficial to society only if it is LOST. If it is won, then it only increases the evil in the world, the hatred, the passions of all kinds.

Chaplin evidently knows that Putin is going to war, and has been instructed, together with all the leading commentators in the Russia media, to prepare society for its inevitability. Being a sergianist, he is obliged to approve of this war and ascribe to it the sacred character of the truly just wars of such Russian heroes as Alexander Nevsky and Alexander the Blessed. But a war on behalf of Shiite Islam against Sunni Islam for the ultimate aim of ensuring the revenues of Russia's robber barons has nothing in common with those wars. Putin's wars so far have been evil and have only increased the evil in society. The coming war will be good only if it removes the evil - that is, first of all, Putin himself together with his neo-Soviet bandit regime.

*December 4/17, 2015.
Holy Great-Martyr Barbara.*

28. BRITAIN, EUROPE AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

The issue of whether Britain should stay in the European Union or leave it (the so-called "Brexit" option) may seem a relatively parochial one with little relevance to Orthodox Christians round the world. It is not even high on the EU's agenda, as the contemptuous - and foolish - way in which the Europeans rejected Britain's demands for reform yesterday demonstrates. However, if Britain does say "no" to EU membership and leaves the Union (the referendum will probably take place sometime in 2016), it could have major implications for the stability of the New World Order - and therefore should be welcomed by everybody who is hoping for that Order's demise...

For the purposes of this article, we may define the New World Order as that powerful cabal which seeks to destroy national sovereignties, religious differences and traditional moral values in order to create a single world government which alone, according to the cabal, will be capable of fighting such global evils as climate change, population growth, resource impoverishment, etc. Whether these global evils, if they exist, are really so evil, and whether a world government is really the only or the right means to tackle them, is not something that will be discussed here. Suffice it to say that for an Orthodox Christian the New World Order must already be considered an extreme evil because it seeks to destroy traditional religion and morality.

Now the New World Order, in spite of its apparent strength, is already under very serious attack. The most obvious direction of attack is from the Muslim world. The Muslims are undermining the NWO in two ways.

First, there is the direct, military assault on the West's economic interests in the Middle East by Islamic states and groups of various kinds. Although western governments are commonly derided for intervening in the Middle East for the sake of oil, the fact is that the dependence of the West on oil, and hence its crucial importance for the West's survival, cannot be underestimated. If the flow of oil from the Middle East to the West were to dry up, then the West's economy would very quickly seize up and social and political chaos would ensue. The only western nation that could possibly survive such a shock would be the United States because of its new indigenous resources opened up by fracking, and because of its world-wide military power, which would enable it, if necessary, to get its oil from other places by force. However, if Europe and Japan were to go under, the USA would almost certainly go under too.

The second way in which the NWO is being attacked by the Muslims is their peaceful - or, increasingly, not so peaceful - invasion of western countries through migration. The growth of Muslim influence in the West is rapid and inevitable for one simple reason: the Muslims have large families, whereas westerners prefer to abort their children. Almost all the countries of Europe now have rapidly aging populations and demographic growth rates well below that which would sustain the dominance of white, non-Muslim populations. Experience shows that when Muslims reach about 20% of any nation's

population, they become uncontrollable – no-go areas for whites (especially blonde female whites), sharia law operating in parallel with constitutional law, the take-over of schools and universities, the censoring of all anti-Muslim comment, secret (and not-so-secret) murders of “dissidents”, etc. It looks as if Sweden has already reached this stage – helped, of course, by the exceptionally liberal ideology of the Swedish state.

Essentially, the battle to stop the Muslims’ *internal* take-over of the West has already been lost. There is no way that western governments can now stop this short of resorting to civil war against the Muslim population – or building a wall between whites and Muslims on the model of Israel’s wall along the West Bank. But this is not only not remotely practical: it is excluded by the NWO’s human rights ideology.

The Europeans, however, have a *strategy*; it is the strategy of *complete and unconditional surrender*. The German Chancellor Angela Merkel signified the triumph of this strategy when last summer she opened the gates of her country to massive, unprecedented and more-or-less uncontrolled migration from the Muslim Middle East. Already the government measures this has necessitated – such as turning German citizens out of their own properties in order to accommodate migrants – as well as the totally unacceptable behavior of some migrants – such as defecating in public places, and demanding the services of prostitutes at government expense – has created bitter opposition to her policies, and she is beginning a small and hesitant retreat from them. But the game is up; the enemy is already within the gates; there is essentially nothing that the West European states can do except accept the inevitable. As the saying goes: “If you can’t beat them, join them.”

However, it is a little different in Eastern Europe. Hungary’s President Orbán has defied Germany’s “moral imperialism”, as he puts it, and refuses to let the Muslims settle in his country. Slovakia has agreed to take migrants, but only if they are Christians – the only country so far that seems to be concerned to protect Christian civilization. The Romanians say, quite reasonably, that if they cannot absorb their Gipsy Roma population, how can they be expected to take in untold numbers of unassimilable Muslims? Meanwhile, the Bulgarians, in a quiet but determined fashion, have built a wall along their frontier with Turkey...

Greece is in a different position again. Completely helpless to stop the flood of Muslims crossing the Aegean Sea by boat, but entirely dependent on the EU to sustain their vast debt, the Greeks can only look on hopelessly as their Orthodox culture is invaded and destroyed. The Marxist government of Tsipras has reneged on its promise to leave the EU if the Europeans did not release them from their debts. So a “Grexit” seems unlikely in the near future. In any case, the atheist socialist, quasi-totalitarian ideology of the EU is close to the heart of the atheist Marxist Greeks.

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And then there is Britain... On the face of it, the threat "Brexit" presents to the European Union does not seem as great as the disobedience of the Eastern Europeans or the chaos of the Greeks. The negotiations are taking place in a relatively gentlemanly manner (if the Eurocrats can be called gentlemen) and not under the threats of such things as mass invasion, national bankruptcy, etc. Moreover, it may well be asked: what if Britain does leave the European Union? What real difference will that make to the NWO? After all, Britain was one of the countries at the very foundation of the NWO. Whether in or out of Europe, it is not likely to abandon its adherence to NWO's basic philosophy; Britain is not going to "go it alone" in any real sense.

All this is true, but it fails to grasp the most important point: that there is a *momentum* in politics, "a tide in the affairs of men", as Shakespeare put it, and that Britain's exit, combined with the Muslim invasion, the East European "rebellion", the Greek crisis, the financial crisis, the mass youth unemployment, the separatist tendencies of the Scots, the Catalans and others, and the rapid rise of right-wing anti-EU movements in almost all the EU countries - may just tip the balance against stability, against the survival of the European project. Europeans tend to dismiss British concerns because they have been expressed over a long period of time and have never come to anything - so far. But British adherents of "Brexit" - who now number over 50% of the population, according to polls - have the bit between their teeth, and have powerful allies in the very highest reaches of government and business. Moreover, British discontent with the EU is not particularist, or not only particularist - that is, it is not aimed only, or mainly, at European policies that discriminate just against *Britain*. The British eurosceptics are concerned with more wide-ranging issues that go to the very heart of the European project, its very *raison d'être* - issues such as the enormous corruption and unaccountability of the European Commission, its totalitarian tendencies and general lack of democracy, and above all, its *creeping destruction of national sovereignty*.

Now we have seen that the destruction of national sovereignty is one of the aims of the NWO, and the European Union was founded in 1957 with the explicit aim of "ever-increasing union" between its member-countries - an aim that the British flatly reject. If Britain succeeds in leaving the Union, then it will be seen by everyone with eyes to see that that aim has not been achieved, and looks unlikely ever to be achieved... Moreover, Europe is the jewel in the crown of the worldwide NWO project, which cannot be allowed to fail. For if Europe, with its long, complicated and violent history, and great diversity of peoples and cultures, can be welded into one new nation, then there is good hope that other projects of welding smaller nations into larger ones in other parts of the globe will also succeed eventually. If, on the other hand, the union of Europe comes to a halt and even starts to go backwards, then the whole project is under threat...

That is why, beneath the smiles and the gentlemanly diplomacy, there is a steely determination on the part of the Eurocrats not to allow Britain to go her way. If they were sensible, they would make some concessions to the British Prime Minister David Cameron, a Europhile at heart, who wants to campaign in the coming referendum campaign that Britain *stay in* the Union, but who needs concessions from his “European partners”, as he puts it, in order to present a convincing case to the electorate. But the Europeans have now said “no, no, no” to his demands (imitating the Eurosceptic Mrs. Thatcher in the 1980s), thereby placing Cameron in a very difficult position – and making the probability of a “Brexit” that much more likely.

Today’s leader in *The Daily Mail*, Britain’s most popular daily newspaper thundered: “What a charade! From beginning to end, just as the Mail predicted, the Brussels summit followed the familiar choreography of the EU spinmeisters.

“*Act One*: the show of intransigence, with figures such as European Council President Donald Tusk declaring that key British demands for reform are ‘unacceptable’.

“*Act Two*: the dramatic late-night talks, this time over a four-hour dinner of chicken terrine, filet de biche (venison) and spiced oranges.

“*Act Three*: the ‘breakthrough’ or, in David Cameron’s words, the ‘pathway to an agreement’. Much work still to be done... etc., etc. but the way is now clear, we’re assured, for ‘fundamental change’ in a deal to be finalized in February.

“So much for the well-worn script: the reality couldn’t be more different.

“Indeed, the derisory 33-word communique fails to conceal that, yet again, absolutely nothing of any significance was achieved.

“There was a ‘political exchange of views’ on the UK’s referendum plans, it says, while ‘the members of the European Council agreed to work closely to find mutually satisfactory solutions’. In other words, deadlock...”⁴³⁵

When Britain leaves the EU in the summer or autumn of next year, it will most likely lift the drawbridge connecting the island to the continent, stopping further migrants. Thus will be fulfilled an ancient Greek prophecy: “England for the Saxons only”. Whether that, together with other measures to secure that the government actually controls its own people, will actually solve the problem of the Muslim takeover remains to be seen. One thing, however, is certain, however: Britain will again be a sovereign power able to control her borders. Which is more than can be said for the European Union...

⁴³⁵ *The Daily Mail*, September 19, 2015, p. 16.

In about the year 635, the great Byzantine-Syriac city of Damascus fell to the Muslims. The bishop of the city stood on the wall of the city and greeted the conquering Khalid with the words: "Abu-Sulaiman, thy case is prospering and thou has a promise to fulfill me, let us make terms for the this city." The terms for the city were described in an agreement which read as follows: "In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful. This is what Khalid would grant to the inhabitants of Damascus if he enters therein: he promises to give them security for their lives, property and churches. Their city walls shall not be demolished, neither shall any Moslem be quartered in their houses. Thereunto we give them the pact of Allah and the protection of his prophet, the caliphs and the 'Believers'. So long as they pay the poll tax, nothing but good shall befall them..."⁴³⁶

God – the true God, not Allah – was merciful to the Orthodox Christians of Syria at that time, and Khalid the Caliph largely fulfilled his promises. This was probably because most of the Christians remained faithful to Orthodoxy. (On the wall of the city together with the bishop there stood the grandfather of St. John of Damascus, who confessed the faith against both Islam and Iconoclasm some one hundred years later.) The situation is very different today. The Orthodox Christians of Syria have for many decades now been in communion with the Monophysite heretics, and hierarchs such as Metropolitan Georges Khodre have openly apostasised through their acceptance of Islam. So a new, much crueller caliph has been sent to torment them.

But of course the Syrians are not alone in their apostasy. Throughout the Middle East and Eastern Europe the Orthodox have apostasized from True Orthodoxy, hobnobbing and worshipping with popes and cardinals, with rabbis and imams. And so through an ineluctable justice God has sent His avenging hordes westwards, while the NWO Europeans, totally unable to defend their own borders, have appeased them in the grossest way, not only politically but – much more seriously – religiously as well. But like all appeasers, they will not succeed in their aim: their abject surrender will only excite the contempt of the Muslims and therefore their cruelty against those who, in their opinion, are too despicable to be worthy of mercy. Real salvation will come only through a return to the truth faith. But in the meantime a good first step would be the re-establishment of national sovereignty and national frontiers as against the borderless NWO. And for that first step Britain's exit from Europe will be a very welcome example and incentive...

December 6/19, 2015.

⁴³⁶ Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972, p. 18.

29. DOES ANCESTRY MATTER?

A man is not noble because of his ancestry. For the only true nobility is that which is gained through virtue. The boast of true nobility is not the renown of a man's ancestors, but his own good deeds and a way of life pleasing to God.
St. John the Merciful, Patriarch of Alexandria.

Snobbery is a well-known passion. A person from a “good” family likes to think of himself as better by that very fact than a person from a “bad” family. The word “aristocrat” has snobbery written all over it; it comes from the Greek word meaning “better”. Of course, in reaction to aristocratic snobbery, there is also anti-aristocratic snobbery. In Soviet times, to be of an aristocratic family was considered to be a sign of inferiority, of decadence, while working-class origins were prized.

On the Sundays preceding the Nativity of Christ we remind ourselves of Christ's origins after the flesh. Was He of a “good” family? He certainly had some of the greatest men and women in history among His ancestors: Noah, Abraham, David, Joachim and Anna, the Mother of God. But they were not all of that quality. Even the most Pure Mother of God, who was of course His most direct ancestor, was not completely free from sin. She had to be purified by the descent of the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation before she could become the Mother of the Word. That is why the Orthodox Church rejects the Catholic dogma of her immaculate conception from her parents Joachim and Anna.

The old Adam, unredeemed human nature, was not worthy to enter the Kingdom of heaven – even at its best. Therefore Christ came, put on the old Adam from its best representative, and fashioned it anew. Those who receive this new, refashioned human nature through the sacraments of the Church become the sons of God. As St. Paul says, “both He Who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren... Forasmuch then as the children have partaken of Flesh and Blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same” (Hebrews 2.11, 14).

Now this is an ancestry to be proud of! Descent from the Son of God through participation in His Body and Blood truly makes us aristos – provided, of course, that we remain faithful to that better part of our nature that we have inherited from the New Adam and not to that inferior blood, tainted by passions and vices of all kinds, that we have inherited from the Old Adam. Therefore the real aristos are the saints. Some had noble origins, some were of lowly birth according to the flesh; some were born of holy parents, some were conceived in fornication, or had evil parents. But all that is discounted as no importance if, having received a new birth, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1.13), they allow their new ancestry to permeate their whole being so completely that the family likeness is unmistakable, revealing themselves to be truly prepodobnij, or “very like” Christ.

Modern science seeks to imitate Christ in the refashioning of human nature. "Gene therapy" is touted as nothing less than the path to superman status, to a new human nature free from illness, with increased intelligence and abilities of all kinds. Perhaps even the gene that causes ageing and death will be discovered, hope the scientists. Then we will truly be "like gods" and immortal. This is the dream of the "transhumanists" - and of our first parents just before they fell into sin and death.

However, scientists may become capable of tweaking some of our character traits, but they will never succeed in making a real prince out of a pauper, a real aristo of the spirit out of Tom, Dick or Harry. First of all, because our spirit is not in our genes. For our genes are formed from the earth, while our spirit was breathed into us by God, so that at death "the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God Who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12.7). And secondly, because "gene therapy" can never be more than a "rearranging", as it were, of the elements of the old Adam: it can never a true rebirth through and into the New Adam. However much the scientists may manipulate the old family tree, the new genealogy they come up with will always be a fake, detectable immediately by the true genealogists.

"Never forget," said the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, "that everything is race..." He couldn't have been more wrong. The Jews (of some Disraeli was one) boasted of their descent from Abraham, but Christ rejected their claim because they did not have the works of Abraham, but wanted to kill him. St. John the Baptist also rebuked them, saying that God could create sons of Abraham out of mere stones.

It is a common delusion of the human race to think that it is not one, but divided into various sub-races that differ in essence from each other, so that ancestry really does matter. But God took on the whole of human nature, and every human being, whatever his ancestry, can now be adopted into God's family becoming sons of God and receiving a perfect human nature. It is this new ancestry that matters, not only in time but for all eternity.

*December 9/22, 2015; revised November 13/26, 2016.
Conception of the Mother of God by SS. Joachim and Anna.*

30. THE STATE OF ISRAEL

The horrors of the Jewish Holocaust gave a great moral boost to the Zionist cause, and many thousands of survivors after the Second World War decided to emigrate to what was shortly to become the Zionist state of Israel. However, the British, who still controlled the Holy Land under a UN Mandate, had had extreme difficulties in preserving the peace between the Jews and the Arabs, and now were determined to stop this new exodus from Europe into the country. Illegal immigrants were prevented from landing, and were deported – usually to detention camps in Cyprus. The Zionists of course protested against this, and world opinion, appalled at the revelations of the Holocaust, were on the whole on their side.

But the problem went deeper than a simple refugee crisis. During the war, the British and Americans had agreed on a plan to give refuge to displaced Jews – some to their former countries of origin, and very many to prosperous countries around the globe. Thus America under Roosevelt offered to take 100,000 Jews – an offer that was upped to 400,000 in 1947 in a bill put forward by Congressman William G. Stratton. But the Zionists would have none of it. To put displaced Jews anywhere other than Palestine would have endangered the plan of a Jewish state, for it would have eradicated the necessity for such a state. It also meant that there would be less money going from America to Israel – and the Jews there would have to live on remittances for the foreseeable future. So the real interests of the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust were sacrificed by Jews for the sake of the dream of a Zionist state.⁴³⁷

The powerful American Zionist lobby worked together with Zionist terrorism inside Palestine to undermine British resolve. Three future leaders of the Israeli state – David Ben-Gurion, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir – at different times took up arms against the British in order to drive them out of their promised land and open the gates to unrestricted Jewish immigration. In July, 1946 Begin's Irgun blew up the King David hotel in Jerusalem, and Shamir's Stern Gang committed even worse atrocities against soldiers lying in their beds. The Zionist state of Israel would be brought into existence by Jewish terrorism against both British and Arabs...

Chaim Weitzmann and the Jewish Agency for Palestine, which represented the mass of Palestinian Jewry, denounced the violence. But it worked... For, as Martin Gilbert writes, "the British will to rule had gone: Jewish terror and heightened national aspirations, and Arab determination not to allow a Jewish State to emerge, created a situation where the British Army could no longer maintain control. A severe economic crisis in Britain added to the determination of the government in London not to be saddle with a growing burden, involving extra troops, mounting expenditure, and the anger of the British public that the terrorists and the agitators were not being crushed or even curbed. If India and Burma could be given up, where Britain had been

⁴³⁷ Alfred M. Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection*, New York: Dodd, Mead & co., 1987, p. 57.

responsible for far greater numbers of people over a much longer period of time, and had been faced with problems on a much larger scale, then so could Palestine be given up. Attlee and his Cabinet decided to hand the problem to the United Nations.

“The British government in London had reached the end of its tether. Throughout the year [1947] there had been killings everywhere in Palestine which shocked both British and Jews... No more than 12,000 of the half million Jews in Palestine were believed to be members of the two terrorist organizations. But 100,000 British soldiers were employed searching for them. The Jewish Agency’s own defence organization, the Hagana, also found itself in a series of confrontations with the British. For their part, British soldiers were frequently called upon to help Jews who were being attacked by Arabs...”⁴³⁸

Meanwhile, at the request of the British, the United Nations were working out a plan to partition the land between two states, one Jewish and one Arab, with an international zone in Jerusalem. The Zionists then put into motion “Operation Partition”. Enormous pressure – not excluding bribes and threats – were put on UN member nations to vote “the right way”. Thus “Bernard Baruch was prevailed upon to talk with the French who could not afford to lose interim Marshall Plan aid. Through former Ambassador William Bullitt, the adviser to Presidents passed a message in a similar vein to the Chinese ambassador in Washington.”⁴³⁹ On November 29, after many delegates had been “persuaded” to change their votes, thirty-three nations, including the United States and the Soviet Union and the entire Soviet bloc, voted in favour of the plan. Thirteen nations were against, including all the Arab states and Greece, while Britain was among ten states that abstained...

Stalin’s reason for accepting the plan, writes Paul Johnson, “seems to have been that the creation of Israel, which he was advised would be a socialist state, would accelerate the decline of British influence in the Middle East... Thereafter the Soviet and American delegations worked closely together on the timetable of British withdrawal. Nor was this all. When Israel declared its independence on 14 May 1948 and President Truman immediately accorded it de facto recognition, Stalin went one better and, less than three days later, gave it de jure recognition. Perhaps most significant of all was the decision of the Czech government, on Stalin’s instructions, to sell the new state arms. An entire airfield was assigned to the task of air-lifting weapons to Tel Aviv.”⁴⁴⁰

If this seems surprising in view of Stalin’s violent turn against supposed Jewish conspiracies in the Soviet Union only a short while later, and the Soviets’ consistent support of the Arabs against Israel in later decades, we should remember the “dialectical” relationship between the two horns of the Jewish Antichrist, Israel and the Soviet Union, since their virtually simultaneous birth

⁴³⁸ Martin Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2: 1933-1951, London: HarperCollins, 1998, pp. 788-789.

⁴³⁹ Lilienthal, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁴⁴⁰ Johnson, *History of the Jews*, London: Phoenix, 1987, pp. 525, 526.

in November, 1917. The Bolshevik revolution was created mainly by atheist Jews who cared nothing for Jewish national aspirations. However, Zionist Jews came largely from the Soviet Union and shared its socialist ideals. Not that these East European Jews necessarily loved the Soviet Union – Begin was a survivor of the Gulag and the NKVD's torture chambers.⁴⁴¹ But the spirit of hatred and revenge, which can exist with equal virulence in a nationalist or internationalist culture, was passed from the Pale of Settlement in the west to the Soviet Union in the north to the State of Israel in the south...

Although the vote had been passed in the Zionists' favour, the battle was not over. The Arabs indicated that they would invade the land immediately the Jewish state was proclaimed. Nor did Jewish terrorism stop. Thus in April, 1948 a joint Irgun-Stern operation massacred as many as 250 inhabitants of the Arab village of Deir Yassin. Begin crowed: "God, God, Thou hast chosen us for conquest."

Realizing that partition was unworkable, and would lead to war, as well as having many other consequences incompatible with the interests of the United States (the hostility of the oil-rich sheikhs, the intervention of the Soviet Union in the region), President Truman changed tack and spoke in favour of a temporary UN trusteeship in Palestine, while insisting that he was in favour of partition in the longer term. However, extreme pressure from Chaim Weizmann and the Zionist lobby, combined with worries that he could lose the Jewish vote at the November election, persuaded Truman to change tack again and recognize the Jewish state already on May 14. There was consternation at the United Nations, which was still working out the conditions for the internationalization of Jerusalem, and in the American foreign-policy establishment...

The injustice perpetrated by the partition is made clear in a few statistics. At the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 there had been 600,000 Arabs living in Palestine next to 80,000 Jews.⁴⁴² Thirty years later, the proportional gap had narrowed but was still large: 1.3 Arabs facing 650,000 Jews. "Under the partition plan," writes Lilienthal, "56.4 percent of Palestine was given for a Zionist state to people who constituted 33 percent of the population and owned about 5.67 percent of the land... This is the 'original sin' which underlies the entire Palestinian conflict..."⁴⁴³

The Arabs invaded Israel immediately after her declaration of independence in May, 1948. Nine bloody months later, the Jews emerged victorious.

"A truce, supervised by the United Nations, followed (during which a Zionist terrorist murdered the United Nations mediator). In 1949 the Israeli government moved to Jerusalem, a Jewish national capital again for the first

⁴⁴¹ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 522.

⁴⁴² J.M. Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon, 1992, p. 791.

⁴⁴³ Lilienthal, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

time since the days of imperial Rome. Half of the city [the old part] was still occupied by Jordanian forces, but this was almost the least of the problems left to the future. With American and Russian diplomatic support and American private money, Jewish energy and initiative had successfully established a new national state where no basis for one had existed twenty-five years before. Yet the cost was to prove enormous. The disappointment and humiliation of the Arab states assured their continuing hostility to it and therefore opportunities for great power intervention in the future. Moreover, the action of Zionist extremists and the far from conciliatory behavior of Israeli forces in 1948-9 led to an exodus of Arab refugees. Soon there were 750,000 of them in camps in Egypt and Jordan, a social and economic problem, a burden on the world's conscience, and a potential military and diplomatic weapon for Arab nationalists...."⁴⁴⁴

"Between February and July 1949," writes Peter Mansfield, "the new UN mediator, the American Ralph Bunche, succeeded in securing separate armistice agreements between Israel and Egypt and the Arab states (except Iraq, which nevertheless withdrew its troops). It was broadly agreed to fix a temporary frontier where the lines had been at the start of the negotiations, while certain border areas were demilitarized. Jerusalem was divided between the Arab east and Jewish west. The Gaza Strip came under Egyptian administration.

"No peace treaty was signed. In December 1948 the UN General Assembly appointed a three-member conciliation commission to promote a final settlement and to arrange an international regime for Jerusalem, but all its efforts were frustrated. The Arab states refused to consider a peace treaty unless the Israeli government agreed to accept all Arab refugees wishing to return to Israel. Resolutions demanding that the refugees should be given the option of return or compensation for their property were constantly reaffirmed by the UN General Assembly, and it was on this basis that Israel was admitted to the UN on 11 May 1949. But Israel maintained that the future of the refugees could be discussed only as part of a general settlement. The impasse was complete. Half of the Palestinian Arabs had become refugees. Neither the new state of Israel nor its Arab neighbours could expect even a minimum of security and stability..."⁴⁴⁵

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What kind of state was the new Zionist Israel? Formally speaking, it is a democracy, albeit with minimal rights for the Arabs. In essence, however, it is an apartheid nationalist mini-empire with international tentacles and underpinned by the Talmudic Jewish faith...

⁴⁴⁴ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 793. Many Jewish refugees were driven out from other Arab lands: between May, 1948 and the end of 1967 about 567,000 of them fled to Israel (Lilienthal, *op. cit.*).

⁴⁴⁵ Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East*, London: Penguin, 2003, pp. 237-238.

Paul Johnson has distinguished between four kinds of Jews: observant, assimilationist, Zionist and Non-Jewish Jews (non-nationalist atheists, socialists and Bolsheviks like Trotsky).⁴⁴⁶ We can leave aside the assimilationists and Non-Jewish Jews, for whom their Jewishness was a matter of indifference, or even sometimes shame. The real question was: in what way did observant, religious Jewry differ from Zionist Jewry?

As we have seen, the leaders of Zionism were almost without exception East European Jews who had imbibed the socialist ideas of the Russian revolutionaries. However, they mostly came from religious families, and their Zionism required the familiar Biblical narrative of the chosenness, exile and return of the Jewish people as a justification for their violent acquisition of the land and refusal to share it on an equal footing with its Arab inhabitants. Whether they really believed in the stories of Abraham, Moses and Joshua is irrelevant (their attitude to them was often imbued with modernist scepticism): the fact is that they needed to proclaim them for purely political reasons, and were prepared to make considerable concessions to the rabbis, the leaders of religious Jewry, for that purpose.

We see this especially in the Law of Citizenship, in the determination, as Shlomo Sand writes, of “who would be included among the authorized proprietors of the Jewish state that was being ‘reestablished’ after two thousand years in ‘Israel’s exclusive land’? Would it be anyone who saw himself or herself as a Jew? Or any person who became a Jewish citizen? This complex issue would become one of the main pivots on which identity politics in Israel would revolve.

“To understand this development, we must go back to the eve of the Proclamation of Independence. In 1947 it had already been decided that Jews would not be able to marry non-Jews in the new state. The official reason for this civil segregation – in a society that was predominantly secular – was the unwillingness to create a secular-religious split. In the famous ‘status quo’ letter that David Ben-Gurion, as head of the Jewish Agency, co-signed with leaders of the religious bloc, he undertook, *inter alia*, to leave the laws of personal status in the new state in the hands of the rabbinate. For reasons of his own, he also supported the religious camp’s firm opposition to a written constitution. Ben-Gurion was an experienced politician, skilled at getting what he wanted.

“In 1953 the political promise to bar civil marriage in Israel was given a legal basis. The law defining the legal status of the rabbinical courts determined that they would have exclusive jurisdiction over marriage and divorce of Jews in Israel. By this means, the dominant socialist Zionism harnessed the principles of the traditional rabbinate as an alibi for its fearful imaginary that was terrified of assimilation and ‘mixed marriage’.

⁴⁴⁶ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 455.

“This was the first demonstration of the state’s cynical exploitation of the Jewish religion to accomplish the aims of Zionism. Many scholars who have studied the relations between religion and state in Israel have described them as Jewish nationalism submitting helplessly to the pressures applied by a powerful rabbinical camp and its burdensome theocratic tradition. It is true there were tensions, misunderstandings and clashes between secular and religious sectors in the Zionist movement and later in the State of Israel. But a close examination reveals that nationalism needed the religious pressure, and often invited it in order to carry out its agenda. The late Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz was more perceptive than most when he described Israel as a secular state in religious cohabitation. Given the great difficulty of defining a secular Jewish identity, and the highly uncertain boundaries of this impossible entity, it had no choice but to submit to the rabbinical tradition...

“Just as Israel was unable to decide on its territorial borders, it did not manage to draw the boundaries of its national identity. From the start it hesitated to define the membership of the Jewish ethnos. To begin with, the state appeared to accept an open definition that a Jew was any person who saw himself or herself as a Jew. In the first census, held on November 8, 1948, residents were asked to fill out a questionnaire in which they stated their nationality and religion, and these were what served as the basis for civil registration. In this way the young state managed quietly to Judaize many spouses who were not Jews. In 1950, newborn children were registered on a separate page without reference to nationality and religion – but there were to such forms, one in Hebrew and one in Arabic, and whoever filled out a Hebrew form was assumed to be a Jew.

“Also in 1950, Israel’s parliament – the Knesset – passed the Law of Return. This was the first basic law that gave legal force to what the Proclamation of Independence had declared. This law declared: ‘Every Jew has the right to come to this country as an aleh (immigrant)’ unless he ‘(1) is engaged in an activity directed against the Jewish people; or (2) is likely to endanger public health or the authority of the State.’ Then in 1952 came the law that granted automatic citizenship on the basis of the Law of Return.

“Beginning in the late 1940s, the world rightly viewed Israel as a refuge for the persecuted and the displaced. The systematic massacre of the Jews of Europe and the total destruction of the Yiddish-speaking people drew widespread public sympathy for the creation of a state that would be a safe haven for the remnant. In the 1950s, provoked by the Israeli-Arab conflict but also by the rise of authoritarian Arab nationalism, semireligious and not especially tolerant, hundreds of thousands of Arab Jews were driven from their homelands. Not all were able to reach Europe or Canada; some went to Israel, whether or not they wished to go there. The state was gratified and even sought to attract them (though it viewed with unease and contempt the diverse Arab cultures they brought with their scanty belongings). The law that granted the right of immigration to every Jewish refugee who was subject to persecution on account of faith or origin was quite legitimate in these circumstances. Even

today such a law would not conflict with basic principles in any liberal democracy, when many of the citizens feel kinship and a common historical destiny with people close to them who suffer discrimination in other countries.

“Yet the Law of Return was not a statute designed to make Israel a safe have for those who were persecuted in the past, present or future because people hated them as Jews. Had the framers of this law wished to do so, they could have placed it on a platform of humanist principle, linking the privilege of asylum to the existence and threat of anti-Semitism. But the Law of Return and the associated Law of Citizenship were direct products of an ethnic nationalist worldview, designed to provide a legal basis for the concept that the State of Israel belongs to the Jews of the world. As Ben-Gurion declared at the start of the parliamentary debate on the Law of Return: ‘This is not a Jewish state only because most of its inhabitants are Jews. It is a state for the Jews wherever they may be, and for any Jew who wishes to be here.

“Anyone who was included in ‘the Jewish people’ ... was a potential citizen of the Jewish state, and their right to settle there was guaranteed by the Law of Return. A members of the ‘Jewish nation’ might be a full citizen with equal rights in some liberal national democracy, might even be the holder of an elected position in it, but Zionist principle held that such a person was destined, or even obliged, to migrate to Israel and become its citizen. Moreover, immigrants could leave Israel immediately after arrival, yet keep their Israeli citizenship for the rest of their lives...”⁴⁴⁷

This extraordinary inclusivity in definition was combined with an extraordinary exclusivity that excluded any Jew who embraced any other faith than Talmudism. Thus “in 1970, under pressure from the religious camp, the Law of Return was amended to include, finally, a full and exact definition of who is an authentic member of the people of Israel: ‘A Jew is one who was born to a Jewish mother, or converted to Judaism and does not belong to another religion.’ After twenty-two years of hesitation and questioning, the instrumental links between the rabbinical religion and the essentialist nationalism was now well and truly welded...”⁴⁴⁸

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The State of Israel does not appear to fit into any conventional definition of statehood. It is neither autocratic, nor despotic nor democratic in the ordinary senses of these words. It is both secular and religious at the same time, both globally inclusive of all “Jews” throughout the world yet perversely exclusive of those who have the greatest right to live on its territory, the Palestinian Arabs. It is nationalist, and yet its nationalism is not defined by territory or blood (much as many Jews would like to define it thus), but by religion. The only remotely similar states, paradoxically, are its fiercest enemies, Wahhabist

⁴⁴⁷ Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, London: Verso, 2010, pp. 283-284, 286-287, 288.

⁴⁴⁸ Sand, *op. cit.*, pp. 289-90.

Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran. And yet neither the Arab nor the Iranian states have any Law of Return, any truly comparable myth of exile and return and redemption... In concluding this work, therefore, it will be worth examining what this single apparent exception to its main thesis in the whole history of the world can mean, from the only point of view that would seem capable of comprehending it - the religious-eschatological.

A clue to our search may be found in the relationship between the sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael - the first the ancestor of the spiritual Israel, the Church of Christ, and the other the ancestor of the carnal Israel, the people that fights God. Although the spiritual Israel is blessed, while the carnal Israel is accursed, still an important promise is given to the carnal Israel: that it will *live* in accordance with Abraham's petition: "Let this Ishmael *live* before Thee" (Genesis 17.18). This life cannot be spiritual, because that is promised only to the spiritual Israel. So it must be carnal - physical survival and worldly power. At the same time, St. Ambrose admits the possibility that Abraham's powerful petition could win spiritual life for some of the Jews - but only, of course, if they cease to belong to the carnal Israel and join the spiritual Israel through faith in Christ. For "it is the attribute of the righteous man [Abraham] to intercede even for sinners; therefore, let the Jews believe this too, because Abraham stands surety even for them, provided they will believe..."⁴⁴⁹

The promise of physical life and prosperity has certainly been fulfilled in the extraordinary tenacity of the Jewish race, its survival in the face of huge obstacles to the present day, and - since its gradual emancipation from the ghetto in the nineteenth century, - its domination of world politics and business in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Moreover, since the carnal Israel is promised physical life and power, it is no wonder that since the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and especially since the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948, it has regained power over the land of Israel, driving out most of the Christians in the process, and may well recapture all the land from the Nile to the Euphrates, as was promised by God in His Covenant with Abraham. But it is important to understand that such a reconquest, if it takes place, will not be by virtue of the Jews being the *chosen* people, as they and their Evangelical allies believe, but by virtue of the exact opposite: of their being the *accursed* people - Ishmael rather than Isaac.⁴⁵⁰ For of the two covenant peoples the people that is carnal is given physical gifts that are appropriate to its carnal desires.

⁴⁴⁹ St. Ambrose, *On Abraham*, 88.

⁴⁵⁰ So great have been the worldly successes of the Jews that many Evangelical Protestants have been tempted to ascribe them, not to God's promise to *Ishmael*, but to his promise to *Isaac*. Reversing the interpretation of the Apostle Paul, they have made of the carnal Israel "the chosen people", "the blessed seed" - and this in spite of the fact that this "chosen people" has been the foremost enemy of those who believe in Christ for the last two thousand years! By elevating the carnal Israel into the spiritual Israel, the Protestants fill up a major spiritual and emotional gap in their world-view; for, having rejected both the *concept* of the Church, and the *reality* of it in Orthodoxy, they have to find a substitute for it somewhere else. And so we have the paradoxical sight of the State of Israel, one of the main persecutors of Christianity in the contemporary world, which forbids conversions of Jews to Christianity and has driven out the majority of the Orthodox Christian population, being ardently supported by the Evangelical

For the truth may be, as an anonymous Russian writer has suggested, “that the very preservation up until now of the Jewish people is a result not of their being ‘chosen’, but as a result of their apostasy”. For, having renounced their birth-right, the Kingdom of God, they have received a “mess of pottage” instead – the promise of physical survival and worldly power. “If the Jews, having repented of the crime committed on Golgotha, would have become Christian, then they would have made up the foundation of a new spiritual nation, the nation of Christians. Would they have begun to strive in this case to preserve their nationality and government? Would they not have dispersed among other nations as the missionaries of Christianity just as the Apostles? Would they not have been strangers in a foreign land, not having a fatherland, like unto Abraham, but in this case with a higher spiritual meaning? All this happened with the Jews, that is, they became wanderers, not in a positive spiritual sense, but due to a curse, that is, not of their own will, but due to the will of chastising Providence since they did not fulfil that which God intended for them. Would they not have been exterminated en masse during persecutions as the main preachers of Christianity? Would they not have been assimilated among other peoples, so that the very name ‘Jew’, ‘Hebrew’, as a national name, would have disappeared and would have only remained in the remembrance of grateful nations as the glorious name of their enlighteners? Yes, and the very Promised Land and Jerusalem were given to the Hebrews not as a worldly fatherland, for which they are now striving, but as a prefiguration of the Heavenly Kingdom and the Heavenly Jerusalem, as a token of which Abraham and through him all the Hebrew nation coming out of Haran, renounced their earthly fatherland. For this reason the very significance of Jerusalem and the idea as a prefigurement would have passed away for the Jews, as soon as the Kingdom of God and the Heavenly Jerusalem would have become obtainable for them and would have become for them, as they are now for us, Christian holy places.”⁴⁵¹

Tragically, however, it was not to be: the Jews remain unconverted to this day. Even many Orthodox Jews believe that the foundation of the secular, Zionist State of Israel was a grave sin. So must the foundation of the State of Israel be necessarily evil – and its crowning glory the enthronement of the Antichrist?...

Before jumping to this conclusion, let us recall Alain Dieckhoff’s interpretation of the thought of the nineteenth-century “Forerunners of Zion”: “In Jewish tradition there was only one true remedy for sin: repentance (teshuva), i.e. explicit renunciation of evil and adoption of behaviour in accordance with the Law. The idea of inner repentance was so essential that it was supposed to have coexisted with the Law before the proclamation on

Protestants of the Anglo-Saxon countries. There have even been several attempts by Evangelicals to blow up the mosque of the Dome of the Rock, in order to make it possible for the Jews to build their Temple again – the Temple of the Antichrist!

⁴⁵¹ “How to understand the Jews as being a chosen people”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 41, no. 4, July-August, 1991, pp. 38-41.

Mount Sinai, and even to have existed before the creation of the world. This was above all of an individual nature in Talmudic literature, but took on a collective dimension from the sixteenth century, under the impetus of the Kabbala of Isaac Luria. After that the return to a life of holiness ensured not only the salvation of the individual soul, but also restored the original fullness of the world. Teshuva was no longer limited solely to the existential level, within the narrow confines of the individual; it also concerned the historic level of the national group, and beyond that the cosmic level of mankind. Alkalai went so far as to consider, differing from the classical idea, that collective repentance must necessarily precede individual repentance. There remained the final question: what did this general teshuva involve?

"It involved physical re-establishment of the Jews in the Land of Israel to recreate the national community. Playing on the double meaning of the word teshuva, which strictly means return, Kalischer stated that collective repentance meant a geographical return to Zion and not, at least not directly, a spiritual return. So Jews who returned to Palestine were not breaking the religious Law, since in the first instance their return was a purely material one. It was only later, when they were gathered in Zion, that by the grace of God the truly supernatural redemption would start, bringing with it the individual repentance of every Jew and union with God..."⁴⁵²

In other words, *perhaps the return of the carnal Jews to their carnal homeland is a preparation, in God's plan, a springboard, as it were, for their return to the spiritual Israel, the Church of God...*

*

What basis have we for such a daring conclusion? I suggest that there are two: the *undoubted miracle* of the preservation of the people of the Jews through all their wanderings and tribulations, crowned by the re-establishment of the State of Israel after two thousand years, and the witness of the prophets of the both the Old and the New Testaments to the conversion of the Jews to Christ before the end of the world. Let us look at each of these in turn.

That the re-establishment of the State of Israel is precisely a *miracle* was admitted even by that determinedly secular and non-nationalist Jew, Sir Isaiah Berlin. In 1953 he wrote that the existence of the State of Israel overturns all materialist theories of history "because it shows the power of ideas, and not merely of economic and social pressures. It upsets materialist theories of history according to which environment, or economic factors, or the collision of classes is mainly responsible for what happens. It upsets the various doctrines in accordance with which Israel could not have arisen at all; the doctrines which the German Marxists and Russian Bundists used to adduce in order to prove the impossibility of a Jewish State, and all the various doctrines about the inevitable assimilation of the Jews, advanced by both Jews and

⁴⁵² Dieckhoff, *The Invention of a Nation*, London: Hurst and Company, 2003, pp. 16-19.

Gentiles on the basis of some set of cut and dried premises, or historical theory, or sociological law or system. Nor did the empiricists in the foreign offices of the Great Powers do much better. Very few of the chancelleries of Europe or America seriously believed in the possibility of the rise of even a short-lived 'independent State of Israel'. Very few believed that it would ever have the fighting strength, the unity of spirit which would enable it to triumph over so many obstacles. A great many of the prophets were I the grip of various obsolete theories of how nations rise and fall, or simply of powerful prejudice and emotion; and on the whole they tended to discount too much the sheer power of human idealism and human will-power.

"Israel is not a large-scale experiment. It occupies a very small portion of the earth's surface; the number of persons comprising its population is relatively small. But its career confutes a number of deterministic theories of human behavior, those offered both by materialism and by the fashionable brands of anti-materialism. And that, I will not deny, is a source of great satisfaction to those who have always believed such theories to be false in principle, but have never before, perhaps, found evidence quite so vivid and quite so convincing of their hollowness. Israel remains a living witness to the triumph of human idealism and will-power over the allegedly inexorable law of human evolution. And this seems to me to be to the eternal credit of the entire human race..."⁴⁵³

In other words, the existence of the State of Israel is *a miracle*. And yet Berlin is wrong to locate this miracle in the human spirit alone, or even primarily. The existence of the modern State of Israel is a *miracle of God*...

In order to substantiate this claim, let us return well over two thousand years ago, to the true Prophets of Israel. But "why," it may be asked at this point, "this excursion into prophecy and eschatology when this work is supposed to be a work of history?" Because the miraculous emergence of the State of Israel on the stage of history in our time, and the central part it is already playing in international politics, points to a certain eschatological mystery. And if we ignore this mystery, we risk missing – even radically distorting – the deepest meaning of history, the real relationship between religion and politics that has been the central theme of this series...

Now there are several Old Testament prophecies that speak of the return of the Jews to Israel after a long "captivity" (e.g. Jeremiah 3.16-18; Zephaniah 3.10-13, 18-20; Joel 3; Zechariah 12-14). Some interpreters have understood these prophecies allegorically, as referring to the New Testament Church of the Gentiles; others, as referring to other historical events, both in the past and in the future. However, a close examination of these texts makes it impossible to understand them in any other way than as referring to some future event that has not yet taken place involving the gathering of the Jews from many foreign lands back into Israel, where they undergo, first, a crushing military defeat

⁴⁵³ Berlin, "The Origins of Israel", in *The Power of Ideas*, London: Chatto & Windus, 2000, p. 161.

from a northern power, and then a spiritual revival during which they return to Christ and enter His Church.

Perhaps the most striking and detailed of these prophecies is that of the holy Prophet Ezekiel. In chapter 36 the Prophet Ezekiel describes how the Jews will be gathered back into the land of Israel, and there converted and baptized: "For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you [baptism], and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness... And you shall be My people, and I will be your God" (36.24-25, 28). Then comes the famous vision of the dry bones (ch. 37), which is an allegorical description of the resurrection of the Jews to true faith when they appeared to be completely devoid of it. Then comes the invasion of Israel by Gog and Magog led by "the prince of Rosh" (ch. 38), and the description of how the Jews will spend seven months clearing up after the destruction of the invaders (ch. 39). And then the Prophet says: "All the nations shall know that the house of Israel was led captive because of their sins, because they rebelled against Me, and I turned My face from them, and delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions did I deal with them, and I turned My face from them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Now will I turn back captivity in Jacob, and will have mercy on the house of Israel, and will be jealous for the sake of My holy name" (39.23-25).

Again, in chapters 12 and 13 of the Prophet Zechariah we see how the Jews, at the height of a disastrous war, come to a profound repentance for their apostasy from Christ: "I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and compassion; and they shall look on Me Whom they pierced" (i.e. the Crucified Christ), "and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns over a first-born" (12.10). "In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness [baptism]" (13.1). In chapter 14 a great disaster overtakes the people, and "half the city shall go into captivity" (14.2). But the Lord will fight for Israel, and finally, after a great war, "it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (14.16). Now the mention of the feast of Tabernacles may lead to the thought that this is a Judaic feast, and so the context is the whole world going up to Jerusalem to pray at the Judaic feast - perhaps even to worship the Antichrist! However, in the context it is much more natural to interpret this as being a true, Christian feast, probably the Christian fulfillment of the feast of Tabernacles.⁴⁵⁴

New Testament confirmation of this miraculous return of the Jews to Israel and then their conversion to Christ is to be found in the holy Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Romans (11.15, 25-27): "For if their [the Jews'] being cast away is the reconciling of the world [the Gentiles' conversion], what will their

⁴⁵⁴ David Baron, *Zechariah*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1988, chapter 20.

acceptance be but life from the dead?... For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved."

Origen explains this passage well: "Now indeed, until all the Gentiles come to salvation, the riches of God are concentrated in the multitude of [Gentile] believers, but as long as Israel remains in its unbelief it will not be possible to say that the fullness of the Lord's portion has been attained. The people of Israel are still missing from the complete picture. But when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and Israel comes to salvation at the end of time, then it will be the people which, although it existed long ago, will come at the last and complete the fullness of the Lord's portion and inheritance."⁴⁵⁵ For, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "Although it was rejected, Israel will also be saved eventually... Israel will be saved in its own time and will be called at the end, after the calling of the Gentiles."⁴⁵⁶

What does "all Israel" mean? Blessed Theodoret of Cyr writes: "'All Israel' means all those who believe, whether Jews... or Gentiles."⁴⁵⁷ So when "the fullness of the Gentiles" has been gathered into the granary of the Church, and then "the fullness of the Jews", we will be able to say that "all Israel" has been saved – that is, the whole of "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6.16), the Church of Christ. For, as Holy New Hieromartyr Mark (Novoselov) writes, "if the rejection of the Apostle Paul's fellow-countrymen was, in his words, 'the reconciliation of the world [with God], what will be their acceptance if not life from the dead' (Romans 11.15)."⁴⁵⁸

Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov agrees with this interpretation, linking it with certain verses from the Book of Revelation: "Is this conversion of the Jews that salvation of 'all Israel' which the Apostle Paul foretold? In the Apocalypse it is said that the saved will come 'of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie'. But not the whole of the 'synagogue' will come, but only 'of the synagogue', that is, a part of it. But even here, where the Apostle Paul says that 'the whole of Israel will be saved', he means only a part: 'for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel... They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed' (Romans 9.6, 8).

"The opinion is widespread among us that the conversion of the Jews will take place at the very appearance of the Saviour, when they shall cry out: 'Blessed is He That cometh in the name of the Lord'. But this is not evident from the Apocalypse. But if the Philadelphian conversion will bring 'all Israel' that is to be saved to Christ, then this will, of course, be a great event, fully

⁴⁵⁵ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*.

⁴⁵⁶ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Explanation of the Letter to the Romans*, P.G. 74: 849.

⁴⁵⁷ Blessed Theodoret of Cyr, *Interpretation of the Letter to the Romans*, P.G. 82: 180.

⁴⁵⁸ Hieromartyr Mark, *Pisma k Druziam* (Letters to Friends), Moscow, 1994, p. 125. See also pp. 103-104.

explaining the rejoicing of the Heavens. Israel is a chosen people with whom it will not be possible to find a comparison when he begins to do the work of God. The Jews will, of course, multiply the forces of Christianity for the resistance against the Antichrist. 'If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world,' says the Apostle Paul, 'what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?' (Romans 11.15)."⁴⁵⁹

Another New Testament confirmation of the OT prophecies is to be found in Revelation (3.8): "Behold, says the Lord to the Angel of the Church of Philadelphia, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and make obeisance before they feet, and to know that I have loved thee."

Holy New Hieromartyr Mark (Novoselov) comments on this: "[St. John] with complete clarity speaks about the conversion of the God-fighting people to the Church of Christ, when she, few in numbers and powerless from an external point of view, but powerful with an inner strength and faithfulness to her Lord (Revelation 3.8) will draw to herself the 'remnant' of the God-fighting tribe.

"Gazing with the eye of faith at that which the Lord has done before our eyes, and applying the ear of our heart and mind to the events of our days, comparing that which is seen and heard with the declarations of the Word of God, I cannot but feel that a great, wonderful and joyous mystery of God's economy is coming towards us: the Judaizing haters and persecutors of the Church of God, who are striving to subdue and annihilate her, by the wise permission of Providence will draw her to purification and strengthening, so as 'to present her [to Christ] as a glorious Church, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she should be holy and blameless' (Ephesians 6.27).

"And in His time, known only to the One Lord of time, this... 'synagogue of Satan' will bow before the pure Bride of Christ, conquered by her holiness and blamelessness and, perhaps, frightened by the image of the Antichrist..."

Another important witness is Revelation 7.4: "And I heard the number of those who were sealed; and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." "This sealing," writes Archbishop Averky of Syracuse and Jordanville, "will begin with the Israelites, who before the end of the world will be converted to Christ, as St. Paul predicts (Romans 9.27, 11.26)."⁴⁶⁰

And so the carnal Israel will return to the spiritual Israel, the world's first autocracy to the original Theocracy, to Christ the King of Israel. In this way

⁴⁵⁹ Tikhomirov, *Religioznie-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii* (The Religious-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 570.

⁴⁶⁰ Archbishop Averky, *Rukovodstvo k izucheniu Sviaschennago Pisania Novago Zaveta* (Guide to the Study of the Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament), Jordanville, N.Y. Holy Trinity Monastery, 1987, pp. 406-407.

history will complete a perfect revolution in the good sense of the word "revolution" (unlike the evil revolution briefly discussed in the epilogue). "In my End is my Beginning".

However, a discussion of the destiny of Israel would be incomplete without at least a mention of the destiny of that other country with which Israel's is so closely entwined - Russia. For most of the last thousand years Russia has been the leading national expression of the spiritual Israel, the Church of Christ. But in 1917 Russia fell - and the main agents of her fall were precisely the Jews, who rose to power as Orthodox Russia fell from it. At the time of writing, it looks as if Putin's neo-Soviet Russia may well be that Gog and Magog from the extreme north that destroys the State of Israel before being destroyed herself "on the mountains of Israel". If so, then, as the prophecies also appear to indicate, they will serve each for the other's resurrection from the dead. St. Seraphim of Sarov prophesied that at the end of the world there would be only two important nations: the Russians and the Jews, and that the Antichrist would be a Jew born in Russia. How fitting, then, if the Russian nation which has suffered most from the antichristian Jews in the terrible Russian-Jewish revolution, should finally convert them to Christianity, so that the former bitter enemies, reconciled in the Body of Christ, "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6.16), should fight together against the Russian-Jewish Antichrist!

December 9/22, 2015.

Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God, "Unexpected Joy".

31. THE RISORGIMENTO, VATICAN ONE AND THE FALL OF THE PAPAL STATE

Among the monarchies of Europe there was a unique one that was so absolutist as to give all other monarchies a bad name – the Papacy.

Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh write: "Writing in the 1850s, an historian and Catholic apologist described the Papal States of the immediate post-Napoleonic period as 'a benevolent autocracy'. Between 1823 and 1846, some 200,000 people in this 'benevolent autocracy' were consigned to the galleys, banished into exile, sentenced to life imprisonment or to death. Torture by the Inquisitors of the Holy Office was routinely practised. Every community, whether small rural village or major city, maintained a permanent gallows in its central square. Repression was rampant and surveillance constant, with Papal spies lurking everywhere. Meetings of more than three people were officially banned. Railways were banned because Pope Gregory XVI believed they might 'work harm to religion'. Newspapers were also banned. According to a decree of Pope Pius VIII, anyone possessing a book written by a heretic was to be considered a heretic himself. Anyone overhearing criticism of the Holy Office and not reporting it to the authorities was deemed as guilty as the critic. For reading a book on the Index, or for eating meat on Friday, one could be imprisoned."⁴⁶¹

However, with the arrival of a still more absolutist Pope, Pius IX, in 1846, the forces of nationalism and revolution were to prove more than a match for him.

"Strangely enough, given his subsequent career, Pius IX began his reign with the reputation of a reformer. He was sympathetic to at least some form of Italian unification and nationalism. He envisioned himself, in his capacity of pontiff, serving as a divinely ordained conduit and instrument for Italy's rebirth. He dreamed of presiding over a confederation of Italian states. He even elicited hopeful appeals for support from Mazzini and Garibaldi, who in their naivety fancied they might find a new ally in the Church.

"Whatever illusions Pius may initially have fostered, they quickly evaporated, along with his popularity. It soon became apparent that the Italy the Pope had in mind bore little relation to any constitutional state. In 1848, he doggedly refused to lend his support to a rebellious military campaign against Austrian domination of the north. His studied neutrality was perceived as a craven betrayal, and the resulting violent backlash obliged him to flee Rome in ignominious disguise, as a priest in the carriage of the Bavarian ambassador. In 1850, Papal rule was restored by the arrival of French troops [sent by Louis Napoleon, the future emperor] and Pius returned to his throne. His political position, however, now made no concessions of any kind to liberalism or

⁴⁶¹ Baigent and Leigh, *The Inquisition*, London: Penguin, 1999, p. 196.

reform; and the regime he established in his own domains was to become increasingly hated.⁴⁶²

In December, 1851 Louis Napoleon staged a coup d'état in Paris, and, somewhat surprisingly, the leadership of the Grand Orient (in spite of resistance by some radical Freemasons, such as Ledru-Rollin) decided to support him in the plebiscite that elected him President of the Republic. Napoleon was now indebted to the Masons, and therefore, bowing to their pressure, began to turn against the Pope.⁴⁶³ In particular, he began to support King Victor Emmanuel of Sardinia-Piedmont, a Freemason, in his struggle to expel the Austrians from Italy and unify the peninsula - a movement that eventually led to the stripping of the Papacy of all its secular dominions with the exception of the Vatican City itself.

The Franco-Sardinian alliance was successful: after the victories of Magenta and Solferino in 1859-60, the Austrians retained only Venetia (the Italians acquired that in 1866). Meanwhile, Garibaldi's red-shirts had conquered Sicily and Naples. Only the Papal States in the centre of Italy withstood the Masonic-led onslaught. They, paradoxically, were protected by a French garrison - Napoleon was not yet ready to throw the Papacy to the nationalist wolves. But for how long?...

As his political power crumbled during the course of the revolution, Pius IX sought to compensate for it by asserting his spiritual power in a shriller and more maniacal manner than ever, by increased repression within his kingdom, and by inventing new dogmas that the Catholics were now compelled to believe.

The process had begun in 1854, when, with the support of five hundred Italian, Spanish and Portuguese bishops, many of whom he had appointed to newly created dioceses, he proclaimed the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the Virgin - that is, her freedom from original sin - while in exile in Gaeta. His personal secretary, Monsignor Talbot, said at that time: "You see, the most important thing is not the new dogma but the way it is proclaimed." In other words, the important thing was not whether the dogma was true or not, but the fact that the Pope was asserting his power.

In 1864 Pius issued Quanta Cura, which condemned a whole "Syllabus" of Errors, including modern heresies such as liberalism and socialism⁴⁶⁴, and reasserted the papacy's supremacy over all secular powers.

⁴⁶² Baigent and Leigh, op. cit., p. 197.

⁴⁶³ Jasper Ridley, *The Freemasons*, London: Constable, 1999, pp. 208-210.

⁴⁶⁴ Some of these condemned propositions were: "Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he shall consider true... In the present day it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be the only religion of the state, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship... The Roman pontiff can and should reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization" (Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, London: Bantam books, 1988, pp. 146, 245, 246)

Then, in December, 1869 he convened the First Vatican Council. Two and a half months into the Council, the question of papal infallibility was raised.

In his constitution Pastor Aeternus, the Pope declared his own infallibility on matters of faith and morals when speaking ex cathedra thus:-

“1. If anyone will say that the blessed Apostle Peter was not placed by Christ the Lord as prince of all the apostles and the visible head of the whole of the Church militant, or that he did not receive, directly and without mediation, from our same Lord Jesus Christ only the pre-eminence of honour, and not the true and genuine pre-eminence of power, let him be **anathema**.

“2. If anyone will say that the blessed Peter in his pre-eminence over the whole Church does not have an unbroken line of successors, or that the Roman high priest is not the successor of the blessed Peter in this pre-eminence, let him be **anathema**.

“3. If anyone will say that the Roman high priest has only the privilege of supervising or directing, and not complete or supreme jurisdiction in the Universal Church not only in matters that relate to faith and morals, but even also in those which relate to discipline and the administration of the Church, which is spread throughout the world; or that he has only the most important parts, but not the whole fullness of this supreme power; or that this power is not ordinary and immediate, both over each and every church, and over each and every pastor and member of the faithful, let him be **anathema**.

“4. Faithfully following the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, we teach and define that the following dogma belongs to the truths of Divine revelation. The Pope of Rome, when he speaks from his see (ex cathedra), that is when, while fulfilling his duties as teacher and pastor of all Christians, who defines, by dint of his supreme apostolic power, that a certain teaching on questions of the faith and morals must be accepted by the Church, he enjoys the Divine help promised to him in the person of St. Peter, that infallibility which the Divine Redeemer deigned to bestow on His Church, when it defines teaching on questions of faith and morality. Consequently, these definitions of the Pope of Rome are indisputable in and of themselves, and not because of the agreement of the Church. If anyone were to have the self-opinion, which is not pleasing to God, to condemn this, he must be consigned to **anathema**.”

It is interesting to note that in this last sentence the Pope admits the possibility that in his definitions of the faith he might be right and the Church wrong. In other words, he denied St. Paul's words that it is precisely the Church, and not any individual man, that is "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (I Timothy 3.15).

The new dogma was a complete surprise and shock to all the assembled bishops except those belonging to the Inquisition; and at first only a small minority - 50 out of the 1,084 bishops eligible to attend and vote - was in favour of it. However, Pius now proceeded to apply threats and intimidation. And so "by the time it came to a vote, the Papacy's strong-arm tactics had tipped the balance decisively. In the first vote, on 13 July 1870, 451 declared themselves in favour and eighty-four opposed. Four days later, on 17 July, fifty-five bishops officially stated their opposition but declared that, out of reverence for the Pope, they would abstain from the vote scheduled for the following day. All of them then left Rome, as a good many others had already done. The second and final vote occurred on 18 July. The number of those supporting the Papacy's position increased to 535. Only two voted against, one of them Bishop Edward Fitzgerald of Little Rock, Arkansas. Of the 1,084 bishops eligible to vote on the issue of Papal infallibility, a total of 535 had finally endorsed it - a 'majority' of just over 49 per cent. By virtue of this 'majority', the Pope, on 18 July 1870, was formally declared infallible in his own right and 'not as a result of the consent of the Church'. As one commentator has observed, 'this removed all conciliarist interpretations of the role of the Papacy'.⁴⁶⁵

And so the Council finally consented to the false dogma, declaring: "The Pope is a divine man and a human god... The Pope is the light of faith and reflection of truth."

And yet, if the Pope was infallible, what was the point of the Council? For, as Fr. Sergius Bulgakov wrote, "how could a Council be expected to pass the resolution if it has no power to decide anything on which the Pope alone has the right of final judgement? How could the Council have consented even to debate such an absurdity? It can, of course, be argued that the Vatican Council had to carry out the Pope's behest from obedience, regardless of content. But even as infallible, the Pope cannot do meaningless and self-contradictory things, such as submitting to a Council's decision a motion when the power to decide belongs not to it, but to him."⁴⁶⁶

Bishop Joseph Georg Strossmayer of Diakovar, in Croatia, was one of the bishops who opposed the dogma of infallibility. "In 1871," writes Fr. Alexey Young, "he wrote to a friend that he would rather die than accept this false teaching, adding: 'Better to be exposed to every humiliation than to bend my knee to Baal, to arrogance incarnate.' But apparently the humiliations and threats imposed on him by Rome proved, after ten long years, too much to oppose. He finally submitted to the new teaching in 1881."⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁵ Baigent and Leigh, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

⁴⁶⁶ Bulgakov, *The Vatican Council*, South Canaan, 1959, p. 62; quoted in Fr. Michael Azkoul, *Once Delivered to the Saints*, Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 2000, p. 204.

⁴⁶⁷ Young, *The Rush to Embrace*, Richfield Springs, NY: Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, 1996, pp. 31-32.

For a time Pastor Aeternus looked destined to create a schism as devastating as that of the Protestants. As Peter de Rosa writes: "Absolute power had fashioned an absolute 'truth'; and other Christians found one more sky-high barrier between themselves and the Roman church."⁴⁶⁸

"In Italy," writes John Cornwell, "processions and outdoor services were banned, communities of religious dispersed, Church property confiscated, priests conscripted into the army. A catalogue of measures, understandably deemed anti-Catholic by the Holy See, streamed from the new capital: divorce legislation, secularization of the schools, the dissolution of numerous holy days.

"In Germany, partly in response to the 'divisive' dogma of infallibility, Bismarck began his Kulturkampf ('culture struggle'), a policy of persecution against Catholicism. Religious instruction came under state control and religious orders were forbidden to teach; the Jesuits were banished; seminaries were subjected to state interference; Church property came under the control of lay committees; civil marriage was introduced in Prussia. Bishops and clergy resisting Kulturkampf legislation were fined, imprisoned, exiled. In many parts of Europe, it was the same: in Belgium, Catholics were ousted from the teaching profession; in Switzerland, religious orders were banned; in Austria, traditionally a Catholic country, the state took over schools and passed legislation to secularize marriage; in France, there was a new wave of anticlericalism..."⁴⁶⁹

De Rosa writes: "The English-speaking world, too, was far from unanimous in accepting papal infallibility. In 1822, Bishop Barnes, the English Vicar Apostolic, said: 'Bellarmine and other divines, chiefly Italian, have believed the pope infallible when proposing ex cathedra an article of faith. But in England and Ireland I do not believe *any* Catholic maintains the infallibility of the pope.' Later still, Cardinal Wiseman, who in 1850 headed the restored hierarchy of England and Wales, said: 'The Catholic church holds a dogma often proclaimed that, in defining matters of faith, *she* (that is, the church, not the pope) is infallible.' He went on: 'All agree that infallibility resides in the unanimous suffrage of the church.' John Henry Newman, a convert and the greatest theologian of the nineteenth century, said two years before Vatican I: 'I hold the pope's infallibility, but as a theological opinion; that is, not as a certainty but as a probability.'

"In the United States, prior to Vatican I, there was in print the Reverend Stephen Keenan's very popular *Controversial Catechism*. It bore the Imprimatur of Archbishop Hughes of New York. Here is one extract. 'Question: Must not Catholics believe the pope himself to be infallible? Answer: This is a Protestant invention, it is no article of the Catholic faith; no decision of his can bind on pain of heresy, unless it be received and enforced by the teaching body, that is,

⁴⁶⁸ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 243.

⁴⁶⁹ Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope*, London: Penguin, 2000, pp. 14-15.

the bishops of the church.' It was somewhat embarrassing when, in 1870, a 'Protestant invention' became defined Catholic faith. The next edition of the *Catechism* withdrew this question and answer without a word of explanation."⁴⁷⁰

"In the face of such reactions, the Papacy simply became more aggressive. All bishops were ordered to submit in writing to the new dogma; and those who refused were penalised or removed from their posts. So, too, were rebellious teachers and professors of theology. Papal nuncios were instructed to denounce defiant ecclesiastics and scholars as heretics. All books and articles challenging, or even questioning, the dogma of Papal infallibility were automatically placed on the Index. On at least one occasion, attempts were made to suppress a hostile book through bribery. Many records of the Council itself were confiscated, sequestered, censored or destroyed. One opponent of the new dogma, for example, Archbishop Vincenzo Tizzani, Professor of Church History at the Papal University of Rome, wrote a detailed account of the proceedings. Immediately after his death, his manuscript was purchased by the Vatican and has been kept locked away ever since."⁴⁷¹

As Archimandrite Justin (Popovich) writes: "Through the dogma of infallibility the pope usurped for himself, that is for man, the entire jurisdiction and all the prerogatives which belong only to the Lord God-man. He effectively proclaimed himself as the Church, the papal church, and he has become in her the be-all and end-all, the self-proclaimed ruler of everything. In this way the dogma of the infallibility of the pope has been elevated to the central dogma (*vsedogmat*) of the papacy. And the pope cannot deny this in any way as long as he remains pope of a humanistic papacy. In the history of the human race there have been three principal falls: that of Adam, that of Judas, and that of the pope."⁴⁷²

Again, Archimandrite Charalampos Vasilopoulos writes, "Papism substituted the God-man Christ with the man Pope! And whereas Christ was incarnate, the Pope deincarnated him and expelled Him to heaven. He turned the Church into a worldly kingdom. He made it like an earthly state... He turned the Kingdom of God into the kingdom of this world."⁴⁷³

Indeed, although the Pope calls himself "the vicar of Christ", we should rather say, writes Nikolaos Vasileiades, "that the Pope is Christ's representative on earth and Christ... the Pope's representative in heaven".⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷⁰ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-243.

⁴⁷¹ Baugent and Leigh, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-206.

⁴⁷² Popovich, "Reflections on the Infallibility of European Man", in *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1994, pp. 104-105.

⁴⁷³ Vasilopoulos, *O Oikoumenismos khoris maska (Ecumenism unmasked)*, Athens, 1988, p. 34.

⁴⁷⁴ Vasileiades, *Orthodoxia kai Papismos en dialogo (Orthodoxy and Papism in Dialogue)*, Athens, 1981, p. 23.

European individualism since Gregory VII has been of three distinct types: papist individualism which ascribes maximum rights and knowledge to *one person*, the Pope; liberal individualism, which ascribes them to *every person*; and nationalist individualism, which ascribes them to *one nation* or *every nation*, depending on the country concerned. Papist individualism had tended to recede into the background as first liberal individualism, and then nationalist individualism caught the imagination of the European and American continents. But now, having already anathematised the main propositions of liberalism in his *Syllabus of Errors* of 1864, and having stubbornly resisted the triumph of nationalism in his native Italy⁴⁷⁵, the Papacy reiterated with extra force and fanaticism its own variant of the fundamental European heresy - the original variant, and the maddest of them all. For is it not madness to regard oneself, a mortal and sinner and as in need of redemption as any other man, as the sole depository and arbiter of absolute truth?!

However, Divine retribution was swift. On the very day after the decree on Papal infallibility, July 19, the papacy's protector, Emperor Napoleon III, declared war on Prussia and withdrew his troops from Rome, "leaving it prey," as Brian Plumb writes, "to Garibaldi and his redshirts who seized their opportunity. Rome was occupied on the 20th September bringing an end to 1500 years of papal monarchy, so long known and so jealously guarded as the Temporal Power Pius IX and his four immediate successors became voluntary prisoners of the Vatican, an arrangement that satisfied few and was only resolved with the Lateran Treaty of 1929."⁴⁷⁶

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In the same month of September, Napoleon III's army was defeated at Sedan and he was forced to abdicate, in spite of the fact that he had won a resounding victory in a plebiscite only four months before...⁴⁷⁷ Napoleon's sudden fall from grace was caused by a sudden withdrawal of support by the Freemasons. Thus Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes: "H.K. Gries, who was at that time Russian consul in Berne (Switzerland), and later minister of foreign affairs (chancellor) of Alexander III, in accordance with the duties of his office

⁴⁷⁵ "In 1867, with Garibaldi's small force in premature action only fifteen miles from the Vatican, the pope, still defiant, said: 'Yes, I hear them coming.' Pointing to the Crucifix: 'This will be my artillery'" (De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 148).

⁴⁷⁶ Plumb, "The First Vatican Council", *Catholic Life*, April, 2010, p. 6.

⁴⁷⁷ Roger Price writes: "7,350,000 voters registered their approval, 1,538,000 voted 'no', and a further 1,900,000 abstained. To one senior official it represented 'a new baptism of the Napoleonic dynasty'. It had escaped from the threat of political isolation. The liberal empire offered greater political liberty but also order and renewed prosperity. It had considerable appeal. The centres of opposition remained the cities, with 59 per cent of the votes in Paris negative and this rising to over 70 per cent in the predominantly workers *arrondissements* of the north-east. In comparison with the 1869 elections, however, opposition appeared to be waning. Republicans were bitterly disappointed. Even Gambetta felt bound to admit that 'the empire is stronger than ever'. The only viable prospect seemed to be a long campaign to persuade the middle classes and peasants that the republic did not mean revolution" (*A Concise History of France*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 188-189).

observed and carefully studied the activity of the Masonic centre in Berne. To it came encoded despatches from French Masons with exact dates about the movements, deployment and military plans of the French armies. These were immediately transferred through Masonic channels to the Prussian command. The information came from Masonic officers of the French army. And so France was doomed! No strategy and tactics, no military heroism could save her. It turned out that international Masonry had 'sentenced' France to defeat beforehand, and that the French 'brother-stone-masons' had obediently carried out the sentence on their own country (fatherland!). Here is a vivid example of Masonic cooperation with the defeat of their own government with the aim of overthrowing it and establishing an authority pleasing to the Masons. But when this republican parliamentary power was established, it was forced to take account of the national feeling of the French people, deeply wounded by the defeat and the seizing by Germany of Alsace and Lorraine."⁴⁷⁸

Sedan was an historic milestone in more ways than one. Not only did it reverse the decision and the result of the French victory over the Prussians at Valmy in 1792, when the Masons had supported the French against the Prussians. The protector-client relationship between France and the Roman papacy, which had begun when Pope Stephen had crossed the Alps to seek to anoint the Frankish King Pippin in the eighth century, was also now about to end.

For, with the French no longer able to support the Papacy, as Christopher Duggan writes, "there was little to stop the Italian government seizing the historic capital. On 20 September, less than three weeks after the Battle of Sedan, Italian troops blew a hole in the Leonine walls at Porta Pia and marched into the city. Pius IX was left with the small enclave of the Vatican. A law was passed in May 1871 that guaranteed the safety of the pope, provided him with an annual grant, and gave him the full dignities and privileges of a sovereign; but Pius IX rejected it out of hand. The rift between the liberal state and the Church was now broader and deeper than ever."⁴⁷⁹

With the exception of the Vatican, the unification of Italy was now complete. The state's new constitution was, like Louis Philippe's of 1830 and Napoleon III's of 1862, a strange mixture of Christian and antichristian through its claiming that Napoleon was Emperor of the French *both* "by the grace of God" *and* by "the national will". W.M. Spellmann writes: "Under the terms of the first constitution (one actually issued in 1848 by Victor Emmanuel's father Charles Albert to his subjects in Piedmont-Sardinia) the monarch ruled 'by the grace of God' as well as 'by the will of the people'. A bicameral assembly was established with members of the upper house chosen by the king and the lower house elected on the basis of a very restricted franchise..."⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 363-364.

⁴⁷⁹ Duggan, *A Concise History of Italy*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 143.

⁴⁸⁰ Spellmann, *Monarchies*, London: Reaktion Press, 2001, p. 214.

The nationalists were disgusted, writes Adam Zamoyski, that "the process... hailed as the Risorgimento, the national resurgence,... was nothing of the sort: a handful of patriots had been manipulated by a jackal monarchy and its pragmatic ministers. And the last act of 1870 had been the most opportunistic of all."⁴⁸¹ Thus "it was a different Italy that I had dreamed of all my life," said Garibaldi a couple of years before his death. "I had hoped to evoke the soul of Italy," wrote Mazzini from exile, "and instead find merely her inanimate corpse."⁴⁸²

And yet they had gained not only the unification of Italy but also the humiliation of the Papacy, of which Machiavelli had said: "The nearer people are to the Church of Rome, which is the head of our religion, the less religious they are... Her ruin and chastisement is near at hand... We Italians owe to the Church of Rome and to her priests our having become irreligious and bad; but we owe her a still greater debt, and one that will be the cause of our ruin, namely that the Church has kept and still keeps our country divided."⁴⁸³

To others, however, and not only Papists, the "ruin and chastisement" of the Church of Rome was no cause of rejoicing. Thus the Russian diplomat, Constantine Nikolaevich Leontiev, lamented: The Pope a prisoner! The first man of France [President Carnot] not baptized!"⁴⁸⁴ The reason for his alarm was not far to find: for all its vices, and its newest heresies, the papacy was still one of the main forces in the West restraining the liberal-socialist revolution as it descended ever more rapidly down the slippery slope towards atheism.

Pius IX died in 1878 in self-imposed exile, having refused to set foot on Italian soil. And in 1881, as he was being carried to his burial-place, mobs gathered and yelled: "Long Live Italy! Death to the Pope!" ...⁴⁸⁵

In spite of the enormous blow dealt to the power and prestige of the papacy, its megalomaniac delusions continued. Thus in 1895 the future Pope "Saint" Pius X, when he was Patriarch of Venice, wrote: "The pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, but he is Jesus Christ Himself, hidden under the veil of the flesh. Does the pope speak? It is Jesus Christ who speaks. Does the

⁴⁸¹ Zamoyski, *Holy Madness*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999, p. 444.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.* As was written on his tombstone: *O Italia, Quanta Gloria e Quanta Bassezza!*

⁴⁸³ Machiavelli, in Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, London: Allen Unwin, 1946, p. 528.

⁴⁸⁴ Leontiev, "Natsional'naiia politika kak orudie vsemirnoj revoliutsii" (National politics as a weapon of universal revolution), *Vostok, Rossia i Slaviansstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavdom), Moscow, 1996, p. 526. Leontiev also wrote: "If I were in Rome, I should not hesitate to kiss not only the hand but also the slipper of Leo XIII... Roman Catholicism suits my unabashed taste for despotism, my tendency to spiritual authority, and attracts my heart and mind for many other reasons" (*op. cit.*, p. 529). "An interesting ecumenical remark for an Orthodox," comments Wil van den Bercken (*Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 213), "but it is not meant that way." That is, he admired the papacy for its *authoritarianism* without sharing its religious errors.

⁴⁸⁵ Baigent and Leigh, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

pope accord a favour or pronounce an anathema? It is Jesus Christ who accords the favour or pronounces that anathema. So that when the pope speaks we have no business to examine..."⁴⁸⁶

Pagan man-worship was now enthroned at the heart of Catholic Europe; no amount of Christian symbolism and verbiage could hide that simple and horrific fact. Meanwhile, Protestant Europe was fast descending into an abyss of naturalism and atheism, as Dostoyevsky had prophesied. In the twentieth century all of Europe, both Catholic and Protestant, would reap the bitter fruits of this apostasy...

⁴⁸⁶ Pope Pius X; quoted in *Catholique Nationale*, July 13, 1895, Paris: Benziger Brothers Publishing.

32. TWO ABDICATIONS

The abdication of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia in 1917, and of his godson, King Edward VIII of Great Britain in 1936, marked two great milestones in the history of monarchism. The first was, of course, much more important, in that it marked the end of truly Christian monarchism for the indefinite future. But the second was also important as showing how monarchism without Christ – for that is what the continuing reign of Edward VIII would have been – is intolerable to the conscience of a believing nation.

There is an obvious similarity between the two abdications – both were carried out under enormous popular pressure. However, the dissimilarities are more striking – and more important. Essentially, by abdicating Tsar Nicholas brought the Romanov dynasty to an end – but preserved its reputation and thereby the possibility of its future restoration; whereas King Edward's abdication kept the House of Windsor in power, but doomed it ultimately to its present irrelevance.

Tsar Nicholas is often slandered as having been a man of weak will. But real strength is measured, not in the ability to impose one's own will on others, but in the following of Christ's commandments whatever the cost and pressure to do otherwise. And by that yardstick Tsar Nicholas was one of the strongest men ever to ascend a throne.⁴⁸⁷

Throughout his reign, and in spite of inevitable mistakes, he tried to govern his country in the spirit of Christ while resisting the democratic *zeitgeist*. He did not cling onto power for the sake of power or to satisfy his self-esteem, but because he was convinced that if he surrendered it, the country would suffer. The whole of Russian history after the revolution is proof of the correctness of his judgement. And when he did surrender power – partially in the manifesto of October 1905, fully in the abdication of February, 1917 – he did so because he saw that the alternative – civil war – was too high a price to pay. He bent in sorrow, but was never broken in spirit; and in the last analysis, although he abdicated under popular pressure, it was not the pressure that forced his hand, but the consciousness that forcing his will upon the rebellious people – ultimately, by sending troops to kill them during a war against a foreign enemy – would not succeed in restoring the situation but would only allow the foreign enemy to triumph.

Yana Sedova writes: "In view of the solitude in which his Majesty found himself in 1917, the suppression of the revolution would have been the cure, not of the illness, but of its symptoms, a temporary anaesthesia – and, moreover, for a very short time."⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁷ E.E. Alferov, *Imperator Nikolaj II kak chelovek sil'noj voli* (Emperor Nicholas II as a Man of Strong Will), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983, 2004.

⁴⁸⁸ Sedova, "Pochemu Gosudar' ne mog ne otrech'sa?" (Why his Majesty could not avoid abdication), *Nasha Strana*, March 6, 2010, N 2887, p. 2.

“By contrast with Peter I, Tsar Nicholas II of course was not inclined to walk over other people’s bodies. But he, too, was able, in case of necessity, to act firmly and send troops to put down the rebellious city. He could have acted in this way to defend the throne, order and the monarchical principle as a whole. But now he saw how much hatred there was against himself, and that the February revolution was as it were directed only personally against him. He did not want to shed the blood of his subjects to defend, not so much his throne, as himself on the throne...”⁴⁸⁹

On the night of the abdication the Duma representatives Guchkov and Shulgin came to the Tsar with their own abdication text. But the Tsar in his last act as Sovereign was not to be dictated to; he had written his own manifesto. And Shulgin had to admit: “How pitiful seemed to me the sketch that we had brought him...” by comparison with the Tsar’s majestic manifesto.⁴⁹⁰ S.S. Oldenburg writes: “One can speculate whether his Majesty could have not abdicated. With the position taken by General Ruzsky and General Alexeyev, the possibility of resistance was excluded: the commands of his Majesty were not delivered, the telegrams of those who were loyal to him were not communicated to him. Moreover, they could have announced the abdication without his will: Prince Mark of Baden announced the abdication of the German emperor (9.11.1918) when the Kaiser had by no means abdicated! His Majesty at least retained the possibility of addressing the people with his own last word... His Majesty did not believe that his opponents could cope with the situation. For that reason, to the last moment he tried to keep the steering wheel in his own hands. When that possibility had disappeared – it was clear that he was in captivity – his Majesty wanted at least to do all he could to make the task of his successors easier... Only he did not want to entrust his son to them: he knew that the youthful monarch could not abdicate, and to remove him they might use other, bloody methods. His Majesty gave his opponents everything he could: they still turned out to be powerless in the face of events. The steering wheel was torn out of the hands of the autocrat-‘chauffeur’ and the car fell into the abyss...”⁴⁹¹

The story of Edward VIII was quite different. In sharp contrast with the Tsar, King Edward had already shown throughout his life a disdain for Christian principles and – still more important in the eyes of the people – the dignity of the monarchy. They would have been forgiven him if he had changed on ascending the throne. But he did not: he insisted, in spite of his position as king and head of the church, on marrying a twice-divorced woman, Mrs. Simpson, and was so besotted with her that he was prepared – under pressure from the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Canterbury in particular – to renounce the throne in order to marry her.

⁴⁸⁹ Sedova, “Ataka na Gosudaria Sprava” (An Attack on his Majesty from the Right), *Nasha Strana*, September 5, 2009.

⁴⁹⁰ Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II* (The Reign of Emperor Nicholas II), Washington, 1981, vol. 2, p. 253.

⁴⁹¹ Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 641-642.

Moreover, unlike his Russian godfather, he was prepared to compromise with the foreign enemy. Thus after abdicating, in 1937 he went to Germany to visit Hitler, and made no secret of his pro-Nazi views thereafter. The Nazis hoped that he would be their puppet English king after the conquest; and he is even reported as saying that he hoped the Germans would bring their bombing campaign against Britain to a speedy and successful conclusion, which would be the best for everyone... His last, and truest words as he lay dying in lonely opulence in Paris were: "What a waste..."

Ever since the trial and execution of King Charles I of England in 1649, the idea has circulated in the revolutionary consciousness that a king can commit treason against his country. This is, of course, nonsense: in a monarchy, where the source of all power and legitimacy in the political sphere comes from the monarch, there can only be treason *against* the monarch, not *by* the monarch. Nevertheless, even if a monarch cannot commit treason against himself, he can betray the duties of a monarch and the principles of monarchism – and this is what Edward VIII did. It was not only that he was a bad king – there have been many bad kings with the permission of God, and the monarchy has remained standing. For even bad kings have almost always, while sinning in their personal or political lives, valued the monarchy itself and tried to preserve its strength and prestige. Even Ivan the Terrible and Henry VIII, while doing terrible damage to their countries, valued the monarchy itself... Edward VIII was almost unique in not valuing the monarchy at all. And for this unforgivable sin the people despised him. Therefore his abdication, while manifesting his fecklessness and "treason" to the highest degree, paradoxical as it may seem, *saved* the monarchy. For while monarchism can survive bad kings, it cannot survive kings who despise kingship. Indeed, so successful was the transition from Edward VIII to his brother, George VI, that commentators have – only half jokingly – suggested that a monument to Mrs. Simpson should be erected for saving the monarchy...

Tsar Nicholas was everything that Edward VIII was not. He left his people a shining image of personal purity, devotion to duty and truly Christian rule that is reaping a rich harvest of admirers in Russia. And there is now the real possibility that the Russian monarchy could be restored (hopefully it will not be a KGB puppet) – to the delight of millions of Russians who have tasted the bitter fruits of anti-monarchism, their punishment for betraying their Tsar nearly a century ago. The English monarchy, on the other hand, while still popular in the dutiful but dull – and by no means Christian – reign of Elizabeth II, has no such shining image; nor does republicanism cease to gain new followers. The English monarchy has survived by becoming irrelevant as regards power but profitable as regards the exchequer. This is probably the best it can do in a commercial and democratic age. But there is so much more that a true monarch can do – and we must pray to the Holy Tsar-Martyr and his martyred Royal Family that God will raise up a man to do it.

December 30 / January 12, 2015/2016.

33. THE LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE

According to the sentimental, pietistic understanding of the faith, Christianity is not a matter of knowledge, but of feeling. And for those who think and feel in this manner no event in sacred history is so filled with sentimental feeling than the Nativity of Christ. And yet the troparion for the feast in the Orthodox Church places the emphasis precisely on *knowledge*:

*Thy Nativity, O Christ our God,
Hath shone the light of knowledge upon the world.
For thereby they that worshipped the stars
Were taught by a star to worship Thee,
The Sun of Righteousness,
And to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high.
O Lord, glory to Thee.*

Thus the great triumph of the Nativity was that the world through Christ finally broke through the fog of falsehood summoned by the spirits of darkness, and upon men there shone *the light of knowledge*. What kind of knowledge is this? A joyful knowledge, full of feeling – but neither the knowledge of the bare intellect, nor the fallen “knowledge” corrupted by the passions, but the knowledge of *faith*. A knowledge, first of all, that the Word has taken flesh, God has become man, the Creator has become a creature, He Who is beyond space and time has taken up His abode in space and time, He Who is before all being now begins to be...

Remarkable, however, is the manner in which this light of true, living knowledge was imparted to the world. Magi from the East, astronomers who studied the stars, in which, as they falsely believed, lay the clues to the destinies of all men, were drawn by a new kind of star to worship Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. In other words, God caught the pseudo-wise men through the objects of their own false wisdom; He used the stars to lead them to the truth that lies beyond all stars and even the sun, to the Creator of the sun and the stars, Jesus Christ.

In fact, we know that the star that guided them to Bethlehem was not a star at all, but, as St. John Chrysostom tells us, an angel in the guise of a star. For God, the supreme Missionary, does not preach to us from a height far above our everyday concerns, but comes to meet us where we are, in the things we are interested in, and leads us up from there to where He is. The magi believed in the stars; so He will lead them by a star. Or what they think is a star... Of course, they must have realized pretty quickly that this was no ordinary star. It fitted none of the constellations they knew; it moved in front of them; it disappeared when they entered Jerusalem, and reappeared when they left that nest of evil. And then it stopped moving precisely at the place where Christ was born in a manger...

So the star in front of them did not fit their learned theories of the stars. But to their credit, this did not stop them from theorizing; they did not close their minds to the facts just because they did not fit in with their theories. They realized that there were more things in heaven and earth than were even dreamt of in their philosophy.

Moreover, they were open-minded enough to apply a scrap of true knowledge that came from outside their pagan mind-set: the prophecy of Balaam about the rising of a Star out of Jacob (Numbers 24.17; Matthew 2.10-11). "Thinking outside the box", they came to the conclusion that a great king had been born in Israel, and that the star was going to lead them to Him. So not only were they prepared to follow where the truth led them, even if meant destroying all the presuppositions of their pagan mind-set: they also prepared precious gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh – that would be fitting tribute to a great king. Thus they confirmed what we can now call their *faith* by their *works*, and it was counted to them for righteousness. And they received as their reward that which always accompanies the light of true knowledge – "exceeding great joy".

If only our modern star-gazers, the astronomers and physicists and cosmologists, would follow the example of their pagan predecessors in their progress from dry, lifeless knowledge "falsely so-called" (I Timothy 6.20) to the joyful, living knowledge of faith! To an even greater degree than the Magi of old, our modern cosmologists believe that all the clues to the first beginning and final end of the universe lie in the stars, which they believe are completely determined. But unlike the Magi, they do not follow where the truth leads them; they do not believe that their own theories, which end in the great nothingness of the moment before the beginning of space, time and matter, require the hypothesis of a Creator God Who can create the universe out of nothing. They speak about "God-particles", but refuse to countenance the Living God. They believe in the absolute freedom of their own minds, but refuse to allow a scrap of freedom into the universe as a whole.

They should take a leaf out of the Magi's book and start thinking "outside the box". Just as the Magi found inspiration to solve the mystery of the moving star in the Book of Numbers, so they should take inspiration to solve the mystery of the creation of the world in the Book of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". Then they would be filled with the light of knowledge, not the dry, lifeless knowledge of the proud atheist, which is more like darkness than light, but the joyful knowledge of the believing Magi – and bring their own rich gifts of intellect and imagination to the feet of the true Sun of Righteousness...

*December 31 / January 13, 2015/2016.
Apodosis of the Feast of the Nativity of Christ.*