



A German princess, a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, who became the wife of a Grand Duke of Russia; a dazzling society figure, who devoted herself to the service of God and her neighbours; a fervent Lutheran, who became a staunch Orthodox believer and was crowned a martyr by the Lord – these are the milestones of the astonishing life of Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the founder of the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy.

*Olga Kiryanova on the life of the Holy New Martyr Elizabeth, p. 4–13*

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## Editorial note



**T**he majority of our readers are Orthodox Christians. Orthodox is not merely a name we give ourselves to distinguish us from representatives of other faiths and religions. It is more a way of life, a means of fighting evil, of doing good, of praying, of relating to our neighbours – both the faithful and the not so faithful. The most important thing is that Orthodoxy enables us to find meaning in life and shows us the way to the eternal Kingdom of God. Of course, on our journey to heaven we are faced with many temptations, and the Orthodox are no different from anyone else in this respect. One of these temptations is that of nationalism.

A large part of the latest issue of “Sourozh” which you have in your hands is devoted to the theme of “Nationalism and the Church”. Three people – a Russian cleric living in a Greek monastery, a Greek cleric who grew up in England, and an Englishwoman whose journey through life has been varied but who has chosen the Russian Orthodox Church, share with our readers their thoughts on what should be done in terms of the national element of church life. To all that they have to say on this important, complex, and often painful subject we need only add the official position of the Russian Orthodox Church, which states in its Social Concept: ‘Being universal by nature, the Church is at the same time one organism, one body (1 Cor. 12:12). She is the community of the children of God, “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people... which in time

past were not a people, but are now the people of God” (1 Pet. 2:9–10). The unity of these new people is secured not by its ethnic, cultural or linguistic community, but by their common faith in Christ and Baptism. The new people of God “have no continuing city here, but seek one to come” (Heb. 13:14). The spiritual homeland of all Christians is not earthly Jerusalem but Jerusalem “which is above” (Gal. 4:26)...’

The universal nature of the Church, however, does not mean that Christians should have no right to national identity and national self-expression. On the contrary, the Church unites in herself the universal with the national. Thus the Orthodox Church, though universal, consists of a number of Autocephalous National Churches. Orthodox Christians, aware of being citizens of the heavenly homeland, should not forget about their earthly homeland.

And the last word comes from John of Kronstadt: “Love the earthly homeland... it has raised, distinguished, honoured and equipped you with everything; but have special love for the heavenly homeland... that homeland is incomparably more precious than this one, because it is holy, righteous and incorruptible. The priceless blood of the Son of God has earned that homeland for you. But in order to be members of that homeland, you should respect and love its laws, just as you are obliged to respect and comply with the laws of the earthly homeland.”

**Fr Michael Dudko**

# “To Work for God and in God for Suffering Mankind...”

Olga Kiryanova

*A German princess, native of a tiny duchy, who became the wife of a Grand Duke of Russia; a dazzling society figure who devoted herself selflessly to the service of God and her neighbours, with all the strength of her noble soul; a fervent Lutheran who became a staunch Orthodox believer, and who was crowned a martyr by the Lord – these are the milestones of the astonishing journey through life of Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the founder of the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy in Moscow*

He was born on October 20th / November 1st 1864 in Germany, into the family of Grand Duke Ludwig IV of Hesse-Darmstadt. The baby girl was called Elizabeth in honour of her distant relative, Saint Elizabeth of Thuringia, who lived in the first half of the 18th century. An ancestor of the Dukes of Hesse, Saint Elizabeth was renowned for her acts of mercy. On her mother's side Elizabeth was the granddaughter of Queen Victoria of England, at whose court, having lost her mother at an early age, the young girl was brought up from the age of 14. The reign of Queen Victoria represented a whole era characterised by the supremacy of traditional moral values. It was this blessed atmosphere that provided Elizabeth with her spiritual education and which shaped her personality.

In spite of her noble ancestry, the duchess, like her brothers and sisters, was brought up from her earliest childhood in simplicity and modesty; they were taught to limit their needs and to be prepared for a life of self-sacrifice. The children were brought



Princess Elizabeth (Ella).  
London, 1880

up in old English traditions, and their life was organised to a strict order established by their mother. Their clothes and food were very simple. The older daughters did their own domestic chores themselves, cleaning their rooms, making their beds and making fires in the fireplace. Later Elizabeth Feodorovna would say: “I learnt everything at home”. The family endeavoured to bring up each of the seven children on the firm foundation of the

Christian commandments, to inspire in their hearts love for their neighbours, especially for the afflicted. The members of the ducal family deemed it their moral duty to help those of their subjects who were in need, to succour the poor, visit the sick and comfort the grieving. They spent a large part of their personal wealth on charity.

Elizabeth was endowed with many talents: she drew very well, had a fine ear and artistic taste. When she came of age and first entered society she was acknowledged as the most beautiful among the women of Europe's ruling dynasties. At the age of 19 Elizabeth became the wife of Grand Duke Sergei





Alexandrovich, the uncle of Nicholas II, the last emperor of Russia, and moved to Russia. Here she acquired her second homeland. With her charm, intelligence and kindness the young Grand Duchess literally conquered the Russian court.

In 1888, the year of the 900th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus, Sergei Alexandrovich and his wife visited the Holy Land for the first time. In Jerusalem the ducal

**With her charm, intelligence and kindness the Grand Duchess Elizabeth conquered the Russian court. July 1887**

couple attended the dedication of the Church of St Mary Magdalene, Equal-to-the-Apostles, in Gethsemane. The church was built by the Russian Emperor Alexander III in memory of his mother, Empress Maria Alexandrovna, whose holy patroness was Mary Magdalene. This visit to the greatest of Christian shrines



and attending worship in the Russian church with its wonderful architecture and decoration touched the innermost soul of the Grand Duchess. It was here in the Holy Land that she finally decided to adopt Orthodoxy. “All the time I have been thinking and reading and praying to God to show me the right way, and I have come to the conclusion that only in this religion can I find true and strong faith in God. It would be a sin to remain as I am now – to belong to one church in form alone and for the sake of the outside world, while within myself to pray and believe as my husband does”, she wrote in a letter addressed to her brother Ernest. Inspired by the blessed atmosphere of the Holy Land Elizabeth expressed aloud her desire to be buried there.



**After the death of their mother in 1878 Princess Elizabeth and her sisters lived in Great Britain, where they were brought up by their grandmother, Queen Victoria. December 1878**

It was no easy task for her to make the transition from Lutheranism to Orthodoxy, as it signified a break with the centuries-old family traditions of the House of Hesse. At last the time of reflection and doubt, coupled with concern at the loss of spiritual unity and harmony with her nearest and dearest who were unable to accept Elizabeth’s choice, was behind her.

“I have at last decided to belong to your religion and wish to do so for Easter, being able to take the Communion in the Passion Week. It is a great step I am taking, a new life I will begin, but I trust God will bless this decision”, wrote the Grand Duchess in January 1891 to the Tsarevich, Nikolai Alexandrovich, who would become the last Emperor of Russia. Sergei Nikolaevich and Elizabeth were on very close and friendly terms with Niki, as the heir to the throne was known amongst his close family. This friendship became particularly strong following the marriage of the heir to the throne to the younger sister of the Grand Duchess, Princess Alice of Hesse.

The Grand Duchess was received into the Orthodox Church in a ceremony held on 13th April 1891 in the family chapel of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich in the presence of the entire Imperial Family. Elizabeth took the patronymic Feodorovna which was traditionally given to European princesses who married Grand Dukes of Russia, in honour of the Feodorov Icon of the Mother of God revered by the Romanovs. To mark the event Emperor Alexander III issued a special proclamation informing his subjects that his daughter-in-law had adopted Orthodoxy and should henceforth be called “the right-believing Grand Duchess”.

That same year the Emperor appointed Sergei Alexandrovich Governor-General of Moscow. The Governor’s wife became actively involved in charitable work, visiting hospitals, almshouses and refuges for street children, trying to alleviate people’s sufferings: she distributed food, clothes and money and worked hard to improve the living conditions





In 1884 Elizabeth married Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, uncle of the last Emperor of Russia, and moved to Russia. St Petersburg, 1884





**During a visit to the Holy Land in October 1888 Elizabeth visited the holy sites of Christianity and attended an Orthodox service in the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Gethsemane. It was this visit that finally moved the Grand Duchess to adopt Orthodoxy**

of those in need. In January 1892 she founded the Elizabeth Charitable Society. In the course of a quarter of a century nine thousand children passed through the society, which provided many of them with an education and a trade and enabled them to start an independent life. Elizabeth Feodorovna ran a home for children's work groups, the Moscow Council for Children's Homes, in which during the First World War places were allocated by a Committee founded by the Grand Duchess to provide help to the families of those conscripted to the war. From 1905 Elizabeth Feodorovna

was life chairman of the Moscow Division of the Russian Society of the Red Cross. In 1904–1905 during the Russo-Japanese War the Duchess organised help for the front. One of her most striking initiatives was the setting up of sewing workshops, which occupied all the rooms of the Kremlin Palace except the Throne Room. In the palace she established a storeroom for collecting donations to help the wounded and destitute. With the spiritual needs of the Russian soldiers in mind, using donations from the people of Moscow and her own personal resources, the Grand Duchess equipped mobile churches for the army with everything necessary for worship.

At the start of the 20th century Russia entered a period of tragic and terrible ordeals. The political atmosphere was intensifying: there were explosions all over the country –



revolutionary terrorists hunted down representatives of authority who were the very embodiment of the autocratic structure loathed by the revolutionaries. On February 4th 1905 an event occurred which changed Elizabeth Feodorovna's life completely – her husband died at the hands of a murderer.

“There has been a dreadful atrocity in Moscow: Uncle Sergei, who was riding in a carriage near the Nikolskiye Gate, has been killed by a bomb, and his driver fatally injured. Poor Ella, Lord bless her and help her!” recorded the Emperor Nicholas in his diary on February 4th 1905. These brief lines conceal the unbearable pain suffered by the relatives of the Grand Duke. Commander of the Moscow Military District, a gifted state figure, military general and Knight of the Order of St George, who had fought in the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), Sergei Alexandrovich died in peacetime, in his homeland, at the hands of a twenty-seven-year-old fanatic whose fate it was to become a murderer when lots were cast by a group of conspirators.

Elizabeth Feodorovna was the first to arrive at the scene of the tragedy and personally helped to gather the scattered remains of her husband. Risking bringing general disapproval on herself, the widow visited Sergei Alexandrovich's murderer in prison and called on him to repent. She asked the Emperor Nicholas II to pardon the perpetrator but her request was refused.

Thereafter the Grand Duchess resolved to devote herself entirely to acts of mercy and service to her neighbours, and she established a special female community in Moscow on the site of an old merchant's estate. The community was dedicated to the name of Saints Martha and Mary, and was called the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy.

Neither society at large nor those closest to her could fully understand and accept such profound changes in the life of the Grand Duchess, still quite a young woman who had so recently shone so brilliantly at social functions. Her contemporaries found the path

chosen by the Grand Duchess most unusual. In the lives of the Russian saints there are examples of blessed representatives of the higher social order performing acts of charity, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry and taking in pilgrims. In the Middle Ages in Russia many wives of princes, on the death of their husband, would abandon the world and retreat into convents. In the 19th century it was already considered good form, especially amongst the aristocracy, to engage in charitable work; following this practice, many society women would visit the sick and needy, act as patrons of educational establishments for the poor, and of orphanages and almshouses. The Emperor clearly thought that the widow of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich could find herself a similar role while remaining in her usual comfortable environment. But Elizabeth Feodorovna's nature did not allow half measures.

*“One can't believe that I alone, without any outer influence decided this step – which to many seems an unbearable cross I have taken up. And which I will either regret one day, throw over, or break down under. I took it up not as a cross – but as a road full of light God showed me after Serge's death and which years and years before had begun in my soul. I can't tell you when – it seems to me often that already as child there was a longing to help those that suffer.*

*... More and more it grew in me, only being in a position where our duty was to receive, to see heaps of people, to give receptions, dinners, balls and... it could not fill entirely my life.*

*... You can't agree to these ‘большими переходами в жизни’ [great transformations in life] – only think, to me it was no ‘переход’ [transformation], it little by little grew and took form and many, many who followed all my life and know me well here, were not astonished, taking it only as a continuation of what before had begun and that is how I took it.*



Following the example of Grand Duchess Elizabeth the Moscow nobility tried to help the army during the Russo-Japanese War. Making bandages for the army. Kremlin Palace, 1904



*... Certainly I am not worthy of the boundless joy of God letting me work this way – but I will try, and He who is all love will forgive me my mistakes, as He sees the wish I have of serving Him and His. In my life I had so much joy – in my sorrows so much boundless comfort, that I long to give a little of that to others.*

*... I want you both and all, all to know I am – as often said and written – full of perfect peace and perfect peace is perfect happiness... God has given me on this earth a beautiful work to fulfill. Will I do it well or badly He only knows but I will try my best and I put my hand in His and go with no fear whatever to the crosses and criticism this world may have in store... I want to work for God and in God for suffering mankind..."*

*(From letters to Emperor Nicholas II, Moscow, April 1909.)*

The way of life in the Convent of Mercy was extremely simple and lacking in pretension.

*"All our work is founded and lives in religion. The priest guides them [sisters – ed.], we have three times a week admirable lectures to which outside ladies also come. Then at prayers in the morning he reads to them a text out of the New Testament and says a few words of guidance and... I look after them, we talk... We all take tea together, the priest and his wife too and it ends by a talk about religion... Later we will have, like in the convents, a big trapeznaja [refectory] and one will read the Saints' lives and like the head nun I will appear sometimes to assist and see if all is as I wish. There is a good deal of the convent in our life which I find indispensable".*

*(From a letter to the Emperor Nicholas II, Moscow, 18th April 1909.)*

On 9th September 1909 the first church of the Martha and Mary Convent was

dedicated in the names of Saint Martha and Saint Mary, and it was in this church that on 9th April 1910 Elizabeth Feodorovna and her first eighteen followers were initiated as the holy sisters of mercy. The Grand Duchess was the Mother Superior of the Convent.

*"... For me taking of vows is even more serious than if a young girl marries. I am espousing Christ and His cause".*

*(From a letter from Elizabeth Feodorovna to the Emperor Nicholas II, Moscow, March 1920.)*

The Convent was furnished very simply, but Elizabeth Feodorovna saw nothing extreme in this simplicity. "Many think we live on bread and water and kasha, are severer than a convent and... and what a hard life – when it is only simple and healthy. We... have good beds and remarkably nice little rooms with bright chintz and summer furniture", she wrote to Nicholas II. Photographs of the apartments of the Grand Duchess taken during her lifetime give the impression of a simple, spacious room, decorated with great taste and refinement. A contemporary of the Grand Duchess, Nonna Grayton, lady-in-waiting to Princess Victoria, a relative of the Grand Duchess, wrote: "She never said 'I can't', and there was never anything dreary about the life of the Martha and Mary Convent. Everything there was up to date, both on the inside and the outside. And anyone who went there took away a wonderful feeling".

With the start of the First World War a military hospital was organised in the Convent. Every day the Grand Duchess would visit the wounded in hospital, comforting and reassuring them with a tender word, while still taking care of her duties in the Convent. Elizabeth Feodorovna frequently had no more than 3–4 hours sleep. The rest of the time was taken up with providing succour to the suffering, at whose bedside she would often spend long hours, and with earnest prayer. The Mother Superior of the Convent saw her



**In 1904, with the start of the Russo-Japanese War, Grand Duchess Elizabeth set up workshops in the Kremlin Palace where uniforms were made for the Russian army**

daily labour and the not insignificant physical and emotional burdens as an opportunity to perform her Christian duty.

*"I don't one minute think I have taken up a 'подвиг' [ascetic feat], it is a joy, I don't see my crosses nor feel them because of the boundless kindness of God I have always felt – I long to thank Him".*

*(From a letter to Nicholas II, April 1909.)*

Following the October Revolution it became unsafe for the members of the former Imperial family to remain in Russia. It was proposed on more than one occasion that the Grand Duchess, who was closely related to many European monarchs, should leave the

country and go abroad. However she refused to leave the Convent, having resolved to share the fate of the people of the country which she now considered her second homeland. For a while, although the Royal Family was detained under guard, Elizabeth Feodorovna remained at liberty and was able to carry out her charitable work.

On April 24th (May 7th) 1918, on the third day after Easter, Elizabeth Feodorovna was arrested because she was a sister of Alexandra, the wife of Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia. After long months of imprisonment, on the night of July 5th (18th), the Grand Duchess and the nun Barbara who had volunteered to follow the Grand Duchess, together with several other eminent prisoners, were brutally murdered, thrown alive into a deep mine in a forest 12 kilometres from Alapaevsk in Perm province. A local peasant



who witnessed the crime heard the voices of the dying victims for a long time afterwards, coming from the depths of the mine, singing hymns. The soldiers who had committed the execution, terrified at what was happening, threw hand grenades and brushwood into the mine and then set fire to it, but even after this the singing could still be heard for some time.

On 24th October 1918, when the town was occupied by units of the White Army, the remains of the dead were removed from the mine. It became clear that the Grand Duchess had lived for several hours, and although exhausted from pain she had managed to use a piece of her own clothing to bind the wound of one of those who had suffered with her. When the bodies of the Duchess and her companion nun were taken from the mine, their fingers were found to be folded to make the sign of the cross.

With the retreat of the White Army the bodies of the deceased were taken to China. During a halt in Harbin the remains underwent an examination, during which it emerged that the body of Grand Duchess Elizabeth had remained intact after a whole year. On 17th November 1920 with the help of the sister of the Grand Duchess, Princess Victoria of Battenberg (Marchioness of Milford Haven), coffins containing the bodies of Elizabeth Feodorovna and the nun Barbara were taken by boat to Shanghai and then on to Port Said, from where they were taken by train to Jerusalem. They were placed in the crypt of the Russian Church of St Mary Magdalene, Equal-to-the-Apostles, in Gethsemane.

In 1981 the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad canonised Elizabeth Feodorovna and the nun Barbara as martyrs. Their holy relics were transferred with due ceremony from the crypt to the upper church where they were placed in white marble shrines on either side of the altar – the Grand Duchess on the right and nun Barbara on the left. In April 1992 they were also canonised by the Russian Orthodox Church.

The name of the Venerable Martyr Elizabeth is revered today by Orthodox



**The Mother Superior of the Martha and Maria Convent of Mercy, Grand Duchess Elizabeth, in her sitting room, 1912**

believers. Churches dedicated to her have appeared not only in Russia but in many corners of the world. Inspired by the example of the self-sacrificing service of St Elizabeth, women today are forming sisterhoods similar to the Community of Martha and Mary, whose purpose is to help the suffering. One such female community in the name of St Elizabeth is in Britain, in the small town of Bodiam (East Sussex). In August this year a reliquary containing parts of the holy relics of the Venerable Martyrs Grand Duchess Elizabeth and nun Barbara was brought there for a short time by Elisey, Bishop of Sourozh. May their life's journey and their Christian deeds be an example to us all! ■

*Archive photographs from the 19th and early 20th centuries courtesy of the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy*

# TOIL & PRAYERS

The 100th Anniversary  
of the Martha and Mary  
Convent of Mercy

*Olga Kiryanova*

*2009 marks a significant anniversary for all Orthodox Russia – it is one hundred years since the founding of the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy. Today it is difficult to find anyone who has not heard of this wonderful place which has become one of Moscow's major sights*

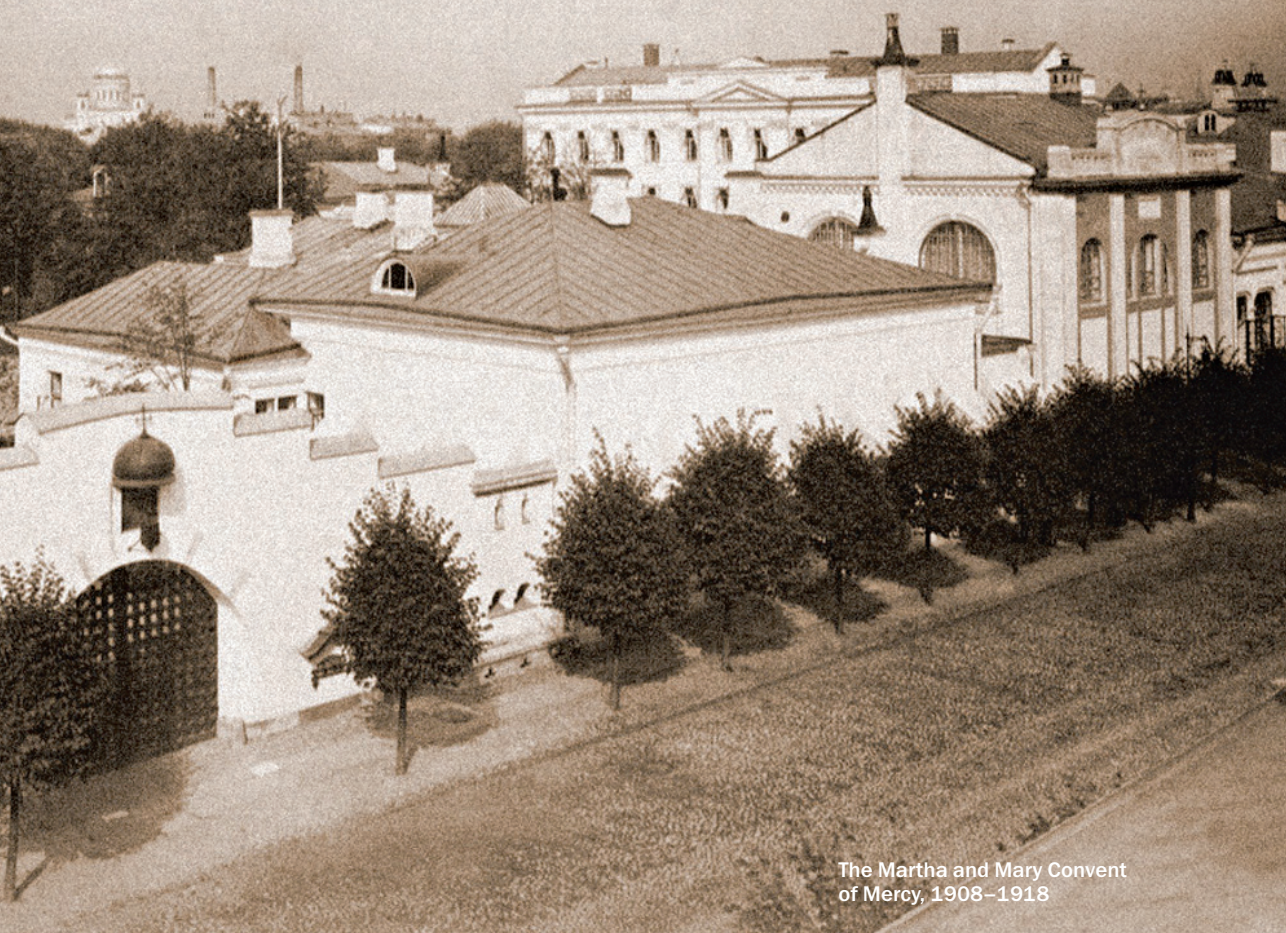
**T**he Convent is situated in the very centre of Moscow, on Bolshaya Ordynka street. Its white stone walls, surrounded by miraculously well-preserved old merchants' houses, lend an indescribable charm to this corner of the Zamoskvorechie district. Here everything exudes history, the imprint of the past is everywhere. But anyone who crosses the threshold of the Convent's holy gates senses above all a blessed atmosphere of joyous peace and tranquillity. This is what draws those who are in need of comfort, help and support to the Martha and Mary Convent.

The major events of the twentieth century and the twists and turns of the personal fate of its founder – the Venerable





*The history of the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy reflects all the twists and turns of the personal fate of its founder — the Venerable Martyr Elizabeth Feodorovna Romanova.*



The Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy, 1908–1918

Martyr Elizabeth Feodorovna Romanova – are all reflected in the Convent’s history. On 4th February 1905 an event occurred which changed Elizabeth Feodorovna’s life completely. Her husband, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich Romanov, died tragically at the hands of terrorists. After the death of her husband the Grand Duchess remained in mourning, began a strict fast and prayed a great deal. She conceived the idea of founding a special female community whose members would devote their lives to the active service of their neighbours. This decision was a logical continuation of Elizabeth Feodorovna’s earlier work as head of most of Moscow’s charitable societies. In May 1907, using her own personal funds, she purchased an old merchant estate in the Zamoskvorechie district, where a military infirmary was

young women and widows could be admitted to the special church rank of “deaconess”. Their task was to assist priests during the baptism of women, and to serve sick and needy members of the Christian community. The sisters of the Martha and Mary Convent saw themselves as the successors to this ancient form of service. The Convent’s founder saw their main purpose as being to care for the poor. This was the main occupation of the sisters, who had received their basic spiritual training and undergone a practical course of training in caring for the sick. When visiting the poor they frequently had to administer first aid and arrange for those who were seriously ill to be admitted to hospital.

The Convent gradually expanded, so that in time it became an entire medical complex. An outpatients’ department

*It was Elizabeth Feodorovna's intention that the Convent should provide the needy with all forms of help, not just medical, but spiritual and educational*

soon opened. On February 10th 1909 the Grand Duchess went to live on the estate together with several female companions. This was the start of the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy, which selected as its heavenly patrons the holy sisters Martha and Mary who are mentioned in the Gospel.

On September 9th 1909 the first Convent church, established in one of the buildings on the estate, was consecrated in the name of Saints Martha and Mary. The church, which was linked to the hospital wards and the apartments of the Mother Superior, was designed in such a way that those who were seriously ill could witness the service from their beds. It was here that on April 9th 1910 Elizabeth Feodorovna and her first eighteen followers took their vows.

In establishing the Convent Elizabeth Feodorovna drew on both Russian and European experience, based on early Christian tradition. In the early Church

opened up alongside the permanent hospital. Every week thirty-four doctors working in six offices saw poor patients free of charge. There was also a dispensary attached to the Convent, where medicines were dispensed to the poor, again without charge to the needy and at a large discount to everyone else. It was Elizabeth Feodorovna’s intention that the Convent should provide the needy with all forms of help, not just medical, but spiritual and educational. To this end the Convent ran a library, which was accessible to everyone and had a stock of more than two thousand volumes. Books were issued free of charge. Around a hundred Muscovites used the library in addition to the sisters and the hospital patients. The Convent opened a Sunday school for the semi-literate women who worked in the factories, a canteen for the poor and a home for orphan girls. All the girls brought up in the home received serious medical training in addition to their





general education, so that they could go on to join the ranks of the sisters.

The process of selecting candidates for the Martha and Maria sisterhood was quite strict. According to the Convent's Statute "Those accepted to the sisterhood are aged between twenty-one and forty, Orthodox believers, literate, in good health and wishing to devote all their strength in the Name of the Lord to serving the suffering, the sick and the needy... The sisters, probationers and those in training perform all the work relating to the Convent of Mercy, and all the duties and instructions imposed on them by the Mother Superior. They perform their work without payment, and any remuneration which they receive for their work as sisters they are obliged to hand over in full to the Convent of Mercy. The sisters may not belong to any political or other organisations and must show the same consideration to all those in need".

By 1912 there were 60 sisters in the community, and two years later their

**A military hospital was opened in the convent during the First World War. The Grand Duchess with sisters and the injured in the convent, 1910s**



**The Mother Superior and the sisters of the convent spent a great deal of time caring for the injured, 1910s**





**Tsar Nicholas II and members of his family were frequent visitors to the convent. Nicholas II with his daughters in the reception room of the Grand Duchess. May 1912**

number had already risen to 105. Many of them were invited to serve in the Convent by the Grand Duchess herself. Among the sisters there were girls from the common people as well as holders of grand aristocratic titles. The Statute required the

members of the community to take vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. However, unlike nuns, after a specified time they could leave the convent and start a family. They wore special vestments of similar design to monastic robes.

The sisters' way of life was extremely simple, modest and lacking in pretension. After morning prayers they went about their various occupations, some to the



hospital to await the doctor's rounds, others to the outpatients' department where the sick waited to receive injections, massage and other treatments, while a third group went to the school and a fourth group went to do kitchen and other domestic work. Twice a week, from 11 till 12, the spiritual father would talk with the sisters. On the occasion of every fast, that is four times a year, and more often if they so desired, the sisters prepared for Holy Communion. A communal meal was served at 12.30, with a reading from the life of the saint of the day. Meals were served in accordance with the church statutes, with Lenten fare served on fast days. Everyone took tea at 4 in the afternoon. At 5 o'clock vespers and matins began, and were attended by all the sisters who were not occupied with work. An all-night vigil was observed before feast days and Sundays. Supper was served at half-past seven. At nine o'clock in the evening common evening prayers were held in the hospital church, after which, having received the blessing of the Mother Superior, the sisters dispersed to their cells. Everyone went to bed at ten thirty in the evening. For their spiritual strengthening and edification the sisters could go every day at specified times to the Mother Superior and the Spiritual Father for advice.

Thanks to its unique status and the fact that the Mother Superior was closely related to the Royal Family, the Convent was frequently honoured by visits from important people. As well as the Emperor Nicholas II and his wife and children, the Convent was visited on more than one occasion by Queen Olga of the Hellenes, Princess Irina of Prussia, the Grand Dukes Mikhail Alexandrovich, Dmitry Pavlovich, Konstantin Konstantinovich, and other members of the House of Romanov.

A church in honour of the Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God was built in the Convent garden, to a design by the architect Shchusev. The church was



**Elizabeth Feodorovna's windows looked out on to the altar side of the Holy Protection Cathedral**

dedicated to the memory of soldiers who perished in the Russo-Japanese War. The Convent's Mother Superior had a fine sense of the beautiful and great artistic taste, and she endeavoured to decorate her creation in accordance with the best traditions of Russian spiritual art. Elizabeth Feodorovna invited academician Mikhail Nesterov to decorate the Holy Protection Cathedral. Nesterov was already an acknowledged master, among whose works one of the most significant was his collaboration with Viktor Vasnetsov on the frescoes of the St Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev. The Grand Duchess's ideas found a sincere and profound response in the soul of this great Russian artist. The Holy Protection Cathedral was consecrated on April 8th 1912. It was the intention of Elizabeth Feodorovna that the nave of the church should also be used for public events, since the Convent was essentially intended to be a centre of education: lectures and spiritual discussions were held here, along with meetings of the Palestine Society, the Geographical Society, public readings of Orthodox literature and other events. The Convent of Mercy provided support to many representatives of the artistic intelligentsia. Elizabeth Feodorovna's windows looked out on to the altar side of the Holy Protection Cathedral. She would usually enter the church through the service entrance and stand in prayer at the Rector's place on the right side of the solea. On August 26th



**In 2008, 80 years after it was closed, regular services began to be held in the Convent's Holy Protection Cathedral following its restoration and rededication**

In 1917 the lower church or crypt of the Holy Protection Cathedral was dedicated to the Archangel Michael and All Angels. It was intended for the repose of the sisters.

With the outbreak of the First World War the Convent's hospital became a military infirmary. The Grand Duchess renewed her work in organising help for the front, setting up field hospitals, first aid supplies, medical trains and sending ambulatory churches to the front.

The start of the revolutionary upheaval in the Russian Empire took its toll on the life of the Convent. Its strong, well-ordered household went into decline. As anarchy increased, the once wealthy and flourishing country of Russia was faced with terrifying shortages. There were no longer enough foodstuffs and medicines, bedlinen had to be

used as bandages for the wounded soldiers in the infirmary. Gangs of looters often broke into the Convent and it was only with immense effort, and thanks to the resilience and courage of Elizabeth Feodorovna, that the sisters succeeded in preventing property from being stolen. In spite of the difficulties, following Elizabeth Feodorovna's example in denying themselves virtually everything, the sisters continued their day-to-day work.

Following the October Revolution it became unsafe for the members of the former Imperial Family to remain in Russia. It was proposed on more than one occasion that the Grand Duchess, who was closely related to many European monarchs, should leave the country and go abroad. However she refused to leave the Convent, having resolved to share the fate of the people of the country which she now considered her second homeland. Initially when the Bolsheviks came to power they were tolerant towards the Convent and even found it





In September 2009 the relics of Grand Duchess Elizabeth and the nun Barbara were brought to the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy. The service of celebration that day was led by Patriarch Kirill

possible to deliver food and medicines for the sustenance of the wounded soldiers in the infirmary. Although the Royal Family was detained under guard, Elizabeth Feodorovna remained at liberty and was able to carry out her work. Nevertheless, the days of the relatively peaceful life of the Convent were already numbered. The tragic denouement would not be slow in coming.

On April 24th (May 7th) 1918, on the third day after Easter, Elizabeth Feodorovna was arrested. That day the Convent had been visited by Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow who had held a service in the Holy Protection Cathedral. Shortly afterwards armed people burst in and demanded that Elizabeth Feodorovna follow them. The reason for the arrest was her close kinship with the Empress Alexandra,

Mary Convent survived until 1926, and the Holy Protection Cathedral continued to function until June 27th 1928. In 1929 the authorities decided to establish a health and education lecture centre and club in the Holy Protection Cathedral. The entrance to this “seat of Soviet culture” was made right in the altar apse. A screen was hung on the western wall of the nave for showing films, and a statue of Stalin was erected on the solea. The vestries adjacent to the altar were turned into toilets. The remaining Convent buildings were occupied by various Soviet institutions.

It was six decades before the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy could begin a new life. One of those behind its revival was Patriarch Alexis of Moscow and All Russia. In response to a petition from the Patriarch in 1992 the Government of Moscow adopted

*Today around 50 sisters can live within the walls of the Convent of Mercy. Here they are always delighted to welcome new like-minded women, who are ready to lead an ascetic life and dedicate themselves to serving their neighbours*

to whom they promised to send the Grand Duchess. She was given no more than half an hour to collect her things. The Mother Superior had time only to gather the sisters together and give them her last blessing. Her cell attendant, the nun Barbara Yakovleva, willingly followed her spiritual mother. After long months of imprisonment, on the night of July 5th (18th), the Grand Duchess and the nun Barbara were thrown alive into the Nizhne-Selinsk mine, situated in a forest 12 kilometres from Alapaevsk in the Verkhotursk district of Perm province. Six other people suffered a martyr's death with them, most of whom belonged to the House of Romanov.

The beloved creation of the Grand Duchess was destined to bear the full burden of the turbulent years following the Revolution. However, to begin with the sisters did not lose hope that the Convent could withstand and survive under the Bolshevik oppression. The Martha and

a resolution to hand over the architectural complex of the Martha and Mary Convent to the Patriarchate. In 1990, thanks to the efforts of the devout lay-women of the Moscow Cathedral of the Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God “The Joy of all who Sorrow”, situated on Bolshaya Ordynka near to the Convent buildings, the Martha and Mary Community of Mercy was established and later became a sisterhood.

In April 1992 Grand Duchess Elizabeth and her cell attendant Barbara Yakovleva were canonised by the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church. Fragments of the relics of St Elizabeth are now held in several parishes in Moscow.

In 1995 the Martha and Mary sisterhood became the Convent Community, and the long and difficult phase of restoring its historical appearance began. The Holy Protection Cathedral, built to the design of the famous architect, Shchusev, as well as other buildings, were in need of serious and





**A few years ago the convent opened a home for young girls and the Elizabeth Grammar School, reviving the traditions of Orthodox education. Girls from the convent at the Patriarchal Service in September 2009**

painstaking restoration which lasted several years. A museum was opened in the former apartments of the Grand Duchess, and the interior was recreated from photographs which had survived.

On September 16th 2008 the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia performed the ceremony to consecrate the Holy Protection Cathedral, where services are now regularly held.

Today around 50 sisters can live within the walls of the Convent of Mercy. Here they are always delighted to welcome new like-minded women, who are ready, without taking the veil, to lead an ascetic life and dedicate themselves to serving their neighbours. Continuing the tradition of their predecessors, the sisters of the Convent work as nurses in various medical establishments in Moscow. The Convent

operates a Patron Service, the Martha and Mary “Holiness of Motherhood” Centre, a cultural and educational centre, icon-painting workshop, pilgrims’ assistance service and a publishing house. The Convent collects items for orphans and prisoners, just as in days gone by, and runs a charity canteen for the homeless and needy. There are plans to develop existing social projects and create new ones. The current generation of sisters of the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy selflessly follow the path shown by the Venerable Martyr Elizabeth Feodorovna. Now as before many people turn to the sisters for help and comfort in their grief. In this respect our time is no different from the early 20th century, when the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy was founded, and which, by the Grace of God, has now entered its second century. ■

*Archive photographs from the 19th and early 20th centuries courtesy of the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy*

# The Veneration of Relics in the Christian Church

*Fr Maxim Mitrofanov*

Christians believe that in the sacraments of the church man is united with God not only in spirit but in body. When a person accepts the Body and Blood of Christ his whole being is transformed. As St Paul wrote “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). The Fathers of the Church called this process “theosis”.

Every person, and even every thing, can be sanctified or made holy only to the extent that he or it is connected to God. God, as the source of sanctification, bestows these blessed qualities, this holiness on those who devote themselves to Him. Saints who have dedicated their whole life and often their death as martyrs to Christ have attained this complete union with God, and after their death God lives through his Grace in their remains, or relics. St Makarios of Egypt wrote: “Just as the fire enters into every particle of iron when it is heated, so the Holy Spirit penetrates

completely with His strength both the soul and the body of the saint.”

We know from documentary evidence that the veneration of relics in Christianity began as early as the 2nd century, from the earliest times of Christian history. During the centuries of persecution, when for Christians martyrdom was testimony to their convictions, to the truth of Christ’s resurrection from the dead and of victory over death, believers held the remains of holy martyrs in awe.

The practice of venerating the relics of saints was formalised by the Seventh Ecumenical Council which took place in Nicaea in 787. The Council resolution states: “Christ our Saviour has given us sources of salvation, the remains of the saints, which pour blessings on the worthy in many different ways. And this is through Christ Who is present in them.” Here is the response to those critics of Orthodoxy who maintain that the veneration of relics and icons is essentially idolatry. True worship and true veneration belong only to God: it is written in the Ten Commandments that “You shall have no other gods before me” (Deuteronomy 5:7). In worshipping the remains of the saints we are above all worshipping God as the source of holiness.

John Chrysostom wrote that Christians are moved to venerate the relics of saints for two main reasons. On the one hand this arouses in us the desire to imitate the deeds of the saints. Every Christian who venerates a saint is trying somehow to align his own life, thoughts, actions and words with the life of that saint. On the other hand it is the miracles and grace of the Lord which are being conveyed to us through the remains, through the relics of the saints. Gregory the Theologian (4th century) writes that holy martyrs drive out demons, cure illness,



**A Moleben to New Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth and the nun Barbara was held in the parish of St Nicholas the Wonderworker, Oxford, to celebrate the visit of the relics on July 12th 2009**



manifest themselves, and prophesy. Their very bodies, when we touch and venerate them, do as much as their saintly souls. Even drops of blood, and everything which bears traces of their suffering, these are as effective as their holy bodies. It is well known that the chains of St Peter performed the same acts of healing as the saint himself.

We know from deepest antiquity that the remains of some saints were remarkable because they remained completely incorrupt. Metropolitan Makarios Bulgakov explains this phenomenon, this miracle, very well, attributing the incorruptibility of the relics to the miracle-working power of the Lord, which has excluded them from the general law of decay – a living lesson for us, as it were, about the future resurrection of the body. But it should be pointed out that the body remaining incorrupt is not of itself a compulsory criterion for the glorification of a saint. For example, the remains of the prophet Samuel existed in the form of dust, while those of the Apostles Peter and Paul were in the form of bones. This is also true of the relics and remains of holy martyrs who were often torn to pieces by wild animals or committed to fire and various forms of punishment which the flesh could not survive.

Early Christians understood very well that every fragment of relics possesses divine strength. When Pope Felix I decreed in 269 that worship must be celebrated only on holy relics the tradition grew of dividing up relics so that they could be installed in new churches. John Chrysostom wrote the following: “holy relics are an inexhaustible treasure, incomparably more precious than any earthly treasures, because if the latter are divided into many parts they are diminished, but if the former (that is, holy relics) are divided, not only are they not diminished, their richness, becomes even more manifest. Such is the nature of spiritual things, that through division they grow, through division they are multiplied.”

This was also well understood by those who opposed the Church of Christ. When they came to power they treated the remains of the saints with extraordinary bitterness and malice. The Roman Emperor, Julian the Apostate (361–364) burned the body of John the Baptist. The English reformer king, Henry VIII, destroyed not only the



**From June to September the members of the Diocese of Sourzh had the opportunity to venerate the relics of the Holy Martyrs Grand Duchess Elizabeth and the nun Barbara. The relics were brought to Britain by Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain. During their stay in Britain the holy relics visited the London cathedral church and other parishes in the diocese**



**The casket containing the fragments of the relics of Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the founder of the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy in Moscow, and the nun Barbara, one of the first sisters of the convent, who were murdered by the Bolsheviks in 1918. The casket was brought to Britain from Jerusalem, where the bodies of the holy martyrs had been taken by the White Army in 1920. Today the relics are kept in the Church of St Mary Magdalene, Equal-to-the-Apostles, at the foot of the Mount of Olives**

monasteries but also virtually all the holy relics in Great Britain. The relics of saints were also destroyed by those active in the French Revolution. One of the first decrees issued by Lenin's government was for holy relics to be opened up and removed. For those who oppose God the holiness emanating from holy relics is unbearable. But even when they have been burned and scattered on the wind relics sanctify this earth of ours, and the saints by their grace are always with us. ■

# ORTHODOXY AND ETHNICITY

*Hieromonk Nicholas Sakharov*

I decided to explore the question of nationality, of cultural identity, from a Biblical point of view.

In the Creed we say, “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty”. Almighty is not really an accurate translation of the Greek word Παντοκράτορ (Pantocrator) or the Russian word “Вседержитель” (Vsederzhitel). Vsederzhitel, or Pantocrator, means the One Who holds all things together, not by power, but by love, in harmony. God has worked throughout history to bring things together, to unite them, to hold them in one.

Just think about the moment when Christ prayed His parting prayer, the last prayer of His earthly ministry. What was He praying for? That all might be one. He was shedding tears and blood during His prayer. He was in agony because unity is so difficult to achieve that God Himself became incarnate to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered (as St John’s Gospel says).

Our history of salvation is directly related to this earnest, heartfelt prayer of Christ for unity. Remember what happens after Adam’s fall. He was created in the image of God the Trinity. The word Adam in Hebrew is not just a name, you can translate it as “mankind”. God created mankind in His image in order that people might live in unity and become like God in the unity of love. But the first thing that happens after the Fall of Adam is that mankind disintegrates into individuals. Adam, who had lived with his wife Eve in love and unity, starts to blame her and says to God, “The woman You gave me, she gave me of the tree to eat”. He immediately leaves her and their unity is broken.

But as our Father Raphael in the monastery used to say, “Our God is an expert.

He knows where to begin.” The first covenant that God made with mankind was made with Noah. Not only with him, however, but with his family as well, because God saw that they were able to live in unity, in brotherly love.

Looking at the history of salvation, we see that the next covenant was with Abraham. When unity was achieved on the level of the family, God proceeded to teach people to live in unity at national level. Abraham was given a promise that God would create a nation from him.

When unity at national level was achieved, God proceeded to the unity of all nations in Christianity. I think it is extremely important for us to understand what it cost God to create this unity. God had to prepare us for the idea of the unity of nations even before Christ came. We say in the troparion of Pentecost, “Calling all men to unity” is the culmination of Christ’s work, the work of salvation.

Now we can understand that anything which goes against the principle of unity goes against Christ Himself. By our divisions we contribute to His agony. Despite the fact that two thousand years have passed, we are responsible for the agony that we read about in the Gospel and we destroy the work of the Holy Spirit, the calling of all men to unity.

I think the saints also are aware of this, and in this connection I may recall St Sergius of Radonezh and his spiritual legacy to Russia. Before St Sergius, Russians could never live together in peace, because there was no concept of a Russian nation. That is why it was very easy for the Tatar-Mongols to conquer the princes, who lived in a constant state of war. St Sergius said, “I have built a church. I have dedicated it to the Holy Trinity, so that you will all be united like God in the



Trinity". By doing this he united the Russian nation in the image of God and you know what happened afterwards – Russians were able to conquer their enemies.

I might mention what Father Sophrony used to say about nationalism in the Church, which divides people, as when people say, "Oh, you are a different nationality. What are you doing here? This is our church". Father Sophrony could never become reconciled to such statements. Once he was told by a priest, "It's impossible to overcome nationalism in our church", and the thought came into Father Sophrony's mind at that moment, "Then salvation is impossible". In his talks, Father Sophrony said, "You must know that if you are a nationalist, you believe in superiority over others, and then you are in darkness and Christ is not with you".

He also said in his talks that nationalism is what killed Christ, because Christ, the Messiah, was rejected because He came for all mankind, not just for the Jews. And I think this is a very important point, – how many of us, just by our thoughts, again kill Christ by thinking in a certain way about our nationality, so that it always predominates.

Remember how the Holy Spirit appeared on the Apostles in the form of fiery Tongues, – in Greek Γλῶσσαι (Glosses), in Russian "Языки" (Yazyki). What does it mean, – Yazyk, Glossa, Tongue? It is an instrument of communion, community. We learn languages in order to be able to communicate. Pentecost teaches us the Pentecostal language of communion with other people. You know that the gifts of the Holy Spirit (of service, communion, love), are not given to serve ourselves. For example, the priest, who is given the priesthood and the right to hear confessions, cannot absolve himself. It is always a service to others, uniting people. And if you look at the opposite – what is the work of the Enemy? Again we look at the Biblical basis and see that people who are possessed live in the desert, the dry place, among the tombs. What does it mean? The place where

there is no other person. There is the spirit of separation. When we start to separate, to withdraw, to reject someone, we know from the Gospel that this is a principle followed by an anti-Christian power.

Father Sophrony was in correspondence with Father George Florovsky, with whom he had much in common. They both lived in the West. In the West, especially, you need to feel and assert the universality of Orthodoxy, free from the confines of nationalism. For both of them the Church was not an appendage to the national culture but the fount of the universal Truth of Christ. Father George said that nationalism in the Church meant the disintegration of the Church.

In their published correspondence you will read how once a metropolitan approached Father George Florovsky and said, "Father George, don't you regret that you are not in the Church in which you were baptized, in your local Church?" And Father George replied, "I did not know that such a church existed. For me the only Church is the Orthodox Church, which is universal in its nature". That is the reason why Father Sophrony built his monastery – to prove to the world that many nationalities can live in unity, as one. Father Sophrony used to repeat, "If you learn to live with one person, say, with Father Prokopy" – many of you might know him – "then you can live with millions of people like him". So this is how you learn to live in unity. Father Sophrony ends this letter to Father George by saying, "To reign (to rule) means to receive from God the power to embrace in the Spirit the whole creation, all that is". This was the vision of Father Sophrony concerning Orthodoxy, a vision which I share, and I believe that his message is essential, especially nowadays when churches face the challenge of dealing with many nationalities in one parish.

It was not the first time such a monastery was founded. An example of a multi-national monastery is the monastery of Paisius Velichkovsky. He was guided by the desire

to overcome national barriers, to prove that Christ is the universal Truth accessible to anyone who is Orthodox.

Nationalism and Orthodoxy were almost opposite words for Father Sophrony. For him, true Orthodoxy was shown by his teacher, Saint Silouan the Athonite. Saint Silouan prayed constantly for the whole of mankind, for all the nations of the world.

Once Father Sophrony was met by a very enthusiastic and happy person in his monastery who said, “Father Sophrony, I became Orthodox last week”. Father Sophrony looked into his eyes, smiled, and said, “Orthodox? For seventeen years I have been trying to become Orthodox and I haven’t succeeded yet”. In his book “Orthodoxy” he writes, “No saint ever called himself truly Orthodox, because if you are truly Orthodox it means you live a perfect, holy life, in perfect obedience to the commandments of Christ”. This is what Orthodoxy is about. Only when you have

the true understanding of the vision of God, which we have in the Orthodox Church, are you able to live a holy, perfect life.

How can we deal with this problem of nationalism? How can we overcome it in ourselves? I think we can find the answer in the New Testament. If you remember that in the Last Judgment, Christ will gather all the people and He will say, “Because you fed Me, because you cared for Me, you clothed Me... Come and inherit the kingdom of heaven, because the least of these was Me, Myself”. Indeed every person, however unimportant that person may seem to be, is Christ Himself. Our attitude to this person is our passport to the kingdom of heaven, because this is what the Last Judgment will be about, – how we treated our fellow humans. The Jews learned love within the nation of Israel. But now, in Christianity, we don’t have this idea of the nation as something which guides our priorities, now every human being is our brother, our fellow Christian. ■

## Some Reflections on the Question of Nationalism and Orthodoxy

*Miriam Lambouras*

**T**he Orthodox Church is for all people, irrespective of country, race or culture. Patriotism – a proper and proportionate love for one’s country – is right and natural, but a strident nationalism or a feeling of superiority can have no place in Orthodoxy.

Here in Britain, Orthodox Christians come from a variety of backgrounds. There is need on all sides for tolerance and sensitivity, making due allowance for

differences in history, national outlook and temperament, if we are to avoid friction and unintentional offence. While it is essential to keep the good elements in our national and historic traditions, at the same time it is equally essential to hold firmly to the universality of the Orthodox Church. In Christ “there is neither Jew nor Greek”.

In the British Isles, for instance, we can trace our Orthodoxy back to almost the beginning of the Christian era. The



Church here was Orthodox from Romano-British times until the Great Schism, so in being received into the Orthodox Church, British people are returning to the original Christian Faith of this country, and this has to be taken into account. They cannot be expected to become Greeks or Russians in order to feel that they belong in the Church. As there is no indigenous Church here, converts will obviously be received via a national jurisdiction – usually Greek or Russian – but they will be received into the One, Holy Orthodox Church of Christ.

At the same time, as several theologians have pointed out, if we are Orthodox then, in one sense, we are also Greek. Divine providence ordered that when the time came for the spreading of the Gospel, there was a network of excellent Roman roads making land travel safe and relatively easy, while Roman warships guarded the seas, and at this time only in history, Greek was the universal language of the Roman Empire. St Paul himself a Jew and also a Roman citizen, from the Greek city of Tarsus, could speak with Romans, Athenian philosophers and Galatian tribesmen.

Greek was the language of the New Testament, of the documents of the Ecumenical Councils, of the majority of the Fathers, and of the great hymnology of the Church. The Church service books were brought to their final form at the famous monastery of the Studion in Constantinople. Monasticism was firmly established in the Byzantine Empire, together with the Church's iconography. The major heresies were dealt with at the Councils' meeting in or near Constantinople, and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed proclaimed as the authoritative statement of faith. All this is our common Orthodox heritage. In this purely ecclesiastical sense, you cannot separate Greek from Orthodox. The Greek brothers, Saints Cyril and Methodios would become missionaries to the Slavs. Pope Gregory the Great, having been in

Constantinople as a deacon, would introduce a simplified form of Byzantine chant – Gregorian chant – to the West.

For the Greek people, Orthodoxy is inextricably linked with their national history. The fall of Constantinople was followed by centuries of oppression under the Ottoman Turks, during which the Greek Church produced many New Martyrs from among the ranks of both laity and clergy, – including Patriarchs, – holding fast to the Faith and fostering patriotism among the people. Many of today's older Greek-speaking population in Britain are refugees from more recent conflicts in Asia Minor and Cyprus. It is easy to understand how, in a purely nationalistic sense, "Hellenism" has, at times, become almost synonymous with Orthodoxy.

We should all rejoice in the different treasures and strengths that each part of the Orthodox Church has to offer to the whole Body. The Church of Jerusalem, for instance, alone has the incomparable honour of being the custodian of the Holy Places directly connected with Our Lord's life on earth, with His Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost. The Church of Russia went on to develop a unique style of iconography, church building and chant, and continuing the tradition of the spiritual counsellor, the Elder, gave us the famous Russian Startzi, while among her many saints are the notable missionaries Nicholas of Japan and Herman of Alaska. Prior to the Revolution, Russia was pre-eminently the land of pilgrims. The thousands upon thousands of New Martyrs of the Soviet Era, who endured indescribable sufferings, are the glory not only of the Russian Church but of the whole Orthodox Church. As with Greece, the Church in Russia was bound up with the nation for centuries.

Each of the other local Churches has its own particular gifts to share with us all, and if we do not understand and appreciate this, then our spiritual life will be the poorer

and our vision of the church will be one-sided and incomplete. Hopefully, as far as Britain is concerned, Greek, Russian and other Orthodox people here will come to learn something of the treasures of Celtic and Saxon Christianity, because this, too, was once a land of saints, holy hermits, formidable abbesses and Royal Martyrs.

Christianity is a missionary faith. In this post-Christian era we are once more facing a genuine missionary situation. Unfortunately we have in this country the abnormal and uncanonical situation of multiple jurisdictions, which has at times led to an “ethnic ghetto” mentality and inter-jurisdictional tensions. As a result, our unity as Orthodox is dispersed and our witness to the non-Orthodox fragmented and largely ineffective.

Many of the parishes here were originally started by refugees and displaced persons who needed the support of their fellowcountrymen and their national Church. The jurisdictions to which they belong now face the double challenge of trying to communicate with their own estranged young people, whose first language is English and who no longer understand the Church services, and who have become assimilated into the current British culture, although they may still keep some of the old “folk” customs, and also with the British people, the majority of whom know absolutely nothing about Orthodoxy, though some may be seeking a spiritual home.

Converts have not always been readily encouraged. Too often the various national

groups simply cannot see why anyone from a different ethnic and cultural background should want to join them. At the same time, tensions are caused when converts come into the Church poorly taught and without any proper understanding and then try to adapt the Faith to suit themselves, or give the impression that they are trying to teach the Orthodox. This does emphasize the importance of thorough preparation and sound instruction for catechumens.

The ongoing problem of the anomaly of numerous jurisdictions and the need for a united witness to the truth of the Orthodox Faith needs to be addressed urgently by the leaders of the Churches. Until the difficulty can be resolved we all need to work together in a spirit of conciliarity and give priority to the growth of spirituality rather than be overly concerned with worldly and national considerations.

Parish churches will vary. Some will use English in their services, others will not. Some will keep the Old Calendar, some the New. Customs at the Great Feasts will reflect different cultural backgrounds. There will be differences in practice regarding Confession and the frequency of receiving Holy Communion. Naturally enough, some people will feel more at home in a parish church belonging to a particular jurisdiction, others will feel equally at home anywhere. But we all belong to the One Orthodox Church and for all of us our ultimate home is the perfected Church, the “Jerusalem above which is the Mother of us all”. ■



# For the Healing of the Nations

Archimandrite Vassilios Papavassiliou

*Nationalism is our form of... idolatry... "Patriotism" is its cult. It should hardly be necessary to say that by "patriotism" I mean that attitude which puts one's own nation above humanity, above the principles of truth and justice; not the loving interest in one's own nation, which is the concern with the nation's spiritual as much as with its material welfare... Just as love for one individual which excludes the love for others is not love, love for one's country which is not part of one's love for humanity is not love, but idolatrous worship*  
**Erich Fromm**

Once asked an Orthodox Cypriot nationalist, "If you had no other choice but to worship at either a Greek Anglican Church or a Russian Orthodox Church, which would you go to?" She replied, "I would go to neither." It could have been worse: she could have said, "I would go to the Greek Anglican Church." But it is a sad state of affairs when an Orthodox Christian fails to recognise that, regardless of the specific tradition that he or she is accustomed to, he ultimately belongs to something far bigger and more inclusive than the Greek or Russian or other Orthodox Church. I often wonder what Greek nationalists are thinking when they claim to believe in "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church", especially considering that most of the Orthodox world is comprised of Slav churches and not Greek ones.

Let me be clear that I am not condemning *per se* the fusion of religious and ethnic identities. Indeed, one of the great achievements of Orthodoxy is that it is never merely a part of a nation's identity. Rather, Orthodoxy assumes and permeates every aspect of a nation's life, its language and culture, its customs and holidays – baptising

and sanctifying an ethnic identity – and makes it Orthodox. Surely the greatest legacy of Byzantium is that vision which saw no limits to the transforming power of divine grace, which sought to Christianise, to baptise every aspect of human existence, however mundane or seemingly profane.

That being said, religious and ethnic identities can become so fused that we are in danger of a false ecclesiology, that we understand the Orthodox Church in terms of an ethnic group. Indeed, the Cypriot nationalist I mentioned above fell into that false ecclesiology. The Body of Christ, if she believed in such a thing, was comprised entirely of Orthodox Greeks (or maybe only Orthodox Greek Cypriots). The majority of the Orthodox world simply fell by the wayside. And so, from Orthodoxy sanctifying one's nationality, nationalism leads us to the idea that one's nationality sanctifies one's Orthodoxy. Here there is no room for St Paul's teaching that "there is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope... one Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:5–6). The early Christians would surely

not have been able to understand the mentality of Christian nationalists. As we read in the Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus, written in the 2nd century: “the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe... They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners... As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a foreign land.”

How far we Orthodox Christians are from early Christian thought! It seems today that Orthodox Christian groups are defined almost exclusively by country, language and customs! Even within the Greek Orthodox Tradition, Greeks and Cypriots are often divided by these very things, and often ethnic religious customs become inseparable from Orthodox Tradition. Sometimes, a certain superstition and religious folklore among simple Orthodox peoples comes to replace the Faith and Tradition of the Catholic Orthodox Church, and the God of our Fathers becomes the god of our grandmothers.

Each Orthodox People has its own religious customs, which are not the same throughout the Orthodox world. The Service for the Feast of Pentecost is the same in all Orthodox Churches (this is Orthodox Tradition), but Russians on the Feast of Pentecost decorate their churches with flowers, while the Greeks do not (this is custom). On the Feast of the Transfiguration, there is a special service for the blessing of fruits (Tradition), but while the Russians bless all fruits, the Greeks bless only grapes (custom). The Creed is the same throughout the Orthodox world (Tradition), but it is recited in different languages (custom). The style of vestments and icons in Russian churches are slightly different from those in Greek churches, but in both cases they are clearly recognisable as Orthodox. These are

just a few examples of how Tradition, while it is the same in every Orthodox Church, also finds a slightly different expression among different Orthodox peoples in accordance with their own ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities. Tradition means unity, but it does not mean uniformity. There is room for a variety of customs, cultures, languages and practices within Orthodox Tradition.

Many Greek Orthodox nationalists claim that we cannot separate our Orthodoxy from our ethnic identity. But in practice this tends to be rather one-sided. What usually happens is that they are happy to leave Orthodoxy aside when it comes to their social and educational interests, celebrating Hellenism without the Orthodoxy, but they are never willing to leave their Hellenism aside when it comes to their religious affairs. The most classic example is the conjoining of the Feast of the Annunciation with the celebration of Greek Independence Day. Celebrating only the Feast of the Annunciation is regarded virtually as heresy among many Greek people. We are told that these two feasts are inseparable. And yet “the crowning moment of our salvation” barely gets a mention in our sermons and celebrations on the 25th March. Moreover, the idea that a Greek revolution in the 19th century can be placed on an equal footing with an ancient feast of the Orthodox Church and the conception of Christ our Saviour is disturbing, to say the least.

But nationalism is to be found not only amongst those who have grown up within a specific Orthodox tradition, but also amongst converts in Britain. It always amuses me that often the very people who condemn terms such as “Greek Orthodox” or “Russian Orthodox” as nationalistic, erroneously regarding these terms as references to ethnic groups rather than traditions, are the same people who express a desire for a “British Orthodox Church”. If, as I said, “Greek” and “Russian” refer to traditions and not to ethnic identities, it is far from clear what would define a British



Orthodox Church apart from nationalism. Is this dream of British Orthodoxy perhaps a desire for the most classic form of Christian nationalism – that of the state Church?

Nationalism amongst converts also finds an expression in a certain opposition to anything that has an ethnic flavour, and a certain lack of empathy with those ethnic Orthodox groups who have come to settle in this country. It is only natural that such groups will feel more comfortable and at home in a church where their own ecclesiastical language and liturgical tradition are preserved. My earliest childhood memories are of the Greek Orthodox Liturgy, and so, naturally, its language is one which has a significant psychological impact for me. And this is the experience of many other Orthodox people also.

Nationalism is not simply a matter of language. There are, for example, Roman Catholics who wish to preserve the Latin Mass for reasons which have nothing to do with nationalism, and there are many Greek Orthodox who, while open to the idea of an English liturgical tradition, are simply unable to respond to the need for it. It is somewhat unreasonable to expect those who have known nothing other than the Greek Orthodox Tradition to take a small library of Orthodox liturgical books and suddenly be able to chant their contents in worship in the English language with the same competence, nor can we expect it to have that same air of antiquity and authenticity. Some British converts, it seems, would prefer to turn the Liturgy into a “Reader Service” or, at best, a very poorly chanted service in English, rather than have a beautiful Liturgy in Greek with all the

richness of ecclesiastical art and tradition that the Orthodox Church has developed and articulated throughout the ages. This attitude, I believe, attaches far too much significance to language and far too little to other aspects of Orthodox liturgical practice and tradition.

What we need is far more compassion and empathy from all sides in order to meet the needs of the various Orthodox groups within the United Kingdom. We also need to take more seriously our affirmation that we are One Church, not a federation of churches. It is sad that the Orthodox in this country seem to have closer and more vibrant relations with the heterodox than they do with each other. Perhaps it is time that we started recognising that our Eucharistic Communion is no small matter – it is something precious which is to be celebrated, valued, preserved and built upon. It is, ultimately, what makes us one body. Alas, we too often allow our various traditions to take precedence over the One Tradition in which we are united. On the other hand, we must resist the temptation to replace unity with uniformity, and to replace Greek or Russian nationalism with British nationalism. The Orthodox Church is neither an ethnic ghetto nor a state Church, but the Kingdom of God, in which all ethnic differences are joined together in one eternal doxology:

“You were slain and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9–10).

May that Kingdom come and God’s will be done on earth as in heaven! ■

# TO CONVEY THE WORLD OF GOD

Reflections on the art of icon painting



In November 2009 the dedication took place of the new iconostasis of the Cathedral of the Russian Church Abroad in London. The iconostasis was made in the icon painting studios attached to the Moscow Theological Academy at Troitse-Sergieva Lavra. The head of the studios, **Father Luka Golovkov**, who came to London for the dedication ceremony, gave an interview to “Sourozh”

**F**ather Luka, you have come to London to attend the dedication of the iconostasis made by your icon painting school for the Cathedral of the Russian Church Abroad. Is this the school’s first overseas commission or does it often undertake such commissions?

**A:** Of course this is not the school’s first commission but we have not made many iconostases for churches outside Russia; the school made one for a church in Rotterdam, and recently made the iconostasis for the Church of St Catherine in Rome. Our teachers also made an iconostasis in Hamburg but not as a commission for the school. So this is basically all the work that the school has done for Orthodox churches abroad.

This commission is unusual because it is rare for us to make an iconostasis within a single year. Normally this process takes several years, but in this instance we were asked to paint the iconostasis more quickly, and we were able to involve not only the school’s current students and the studio attached to the school, but also graduates from the school – without their help the iconostasis would have taken us one and a half or two years to complete.

**Q:** So several master icon painters can work at the same time, in parallel with one another?

**A:** Generally each icon was the work of one master painter. Some of the icons are the students’ graduation projects. For example, the iconostasis was designed by Natalya Sklyarova, working under the direction of her





teachers. She also painted two icons in the Sovereign Tier, the Saviour and the Mother of God, and once this was finished she also painted a small Trinity icon above the canopy of the Royal Doors. Many of the icons in the Sovereign Tier are students' graduation projects. The icons of the Deisis were painted by fourth-year students, including the Icon of Christ Enthroned, a major piece of work, which was painted by one female student. Virtually all the Feasts were painted by third-year students. Two icons were painted in the school's studio – the Icon of the Holy Royal Passion Bearers and the Icon of the Glorious Representatives of the Church Abroad, St John of Shanghai and San Francisco, and St Jonah of Hankou.

**Q: How often in history has an iconostasis been made in this way? Was it the practice for a single master painter to paint the whole iconostasis, or if the iconostasis was particularly big for it to be the work of several master painters? Not only as far as your own school is concerned, but historically in Russia and in other countries.**

**Work on the iconostasis of the Cathedral of the Russian Church Abroad in London was done by teachers, graduates and students of the icon painting studio attached to the Moscow Theological Academy**

**A:** Unless the iconostasis was particularly small it was, of course, never the case that it was painted by one person. For one person to paint a large iconostasis would take a very long time. Usually it would be the work of at least two master painters. As far as our work is concerned, you have to remember the reality of our situation: as a school of icon painting our planning timescales and capabilities are very different, therefore as a rule we involve all the students. Naturally the teachers supervise the work very closely. In order to achieve the desired results the work sometimes has to be modified or completely redone. So we do not always paint icons quickly within the school – our emphasis is on quality.

**Q: How important is it to understand the overall style? Every artist and icon painter has their own style, in spite of the fact that they graduated from the**

**same school and work together, which must leave its mark. How important is it to try to take into account what the person working alongside you is doing? How does it work in practice – do they look at one another's work, do they try to change anything which is not in keeping with the whole?**

**A:** The whole iconostasis was, of course, painted in studios where everyone worked alongside one another and could see the work of the other painters. We held reviews at the drawing stage when we would look at a whole row to make sure that there was nothing in the overall ensemble which did not work well or which was not consistent with the whole. Then at the completion stage we examined all the work in colour to make sure that the colours used were in keeping with one another. But we do know that in antiquity an iconostasis could consist of icons which were not necessarily perfectly matched to one another. In this particular case right from the outset the customer wanted this iconostasis to resemble the famous iconostasis which has survived from the Monastery of St Cyril, the icons from which are now in a museum. In that example it is easy to distinguish two or three masters of the Moscow and Novgorod schools. In the work of one of them the colours are brighter and more powerful, and in the work of the other it is the strength and form of the intervening space which is very striking. At the same time when taken together they form a unified result because the form and the composition are from approximately the same time – they complement each other, they form a most attractive tier. Just as in our lives we have bursts of activity interspersed with quiet moments, in the same way it is important to have points of emphasis within the ensemble while retaining the unified spirit of the composition.

**Q: We know that European artists and icon painters sometimes worked**

**in such a way that the pupil prepares just the basis for a picture or an icon, while the master completes the painting with the very best work, adds the finishing touches, so to speak. How widespread is this approach today?**

**A:** Icon painters today work in various ways, and various practices were also used in antiquity. We have reliable information about how icons were painted in the time of Venerable Father Andrei, in the 15th century, when for the most part a master would paint the icon himself with his pupils working for him. In later times, in the 17th century, the work is divided up, but this probably involved artists working from templates. Icons and paintings at that time are beginning to take on a certain similarity, or uniformity, and the individual line or signature of the various masters who created a particular spiritual and joyful impetus is beginning to disappear.

**Q: Does the icon painting tradition change with time, and how does it change? What exactly is it that changes, and how does this align with the canon?**

**A:** There are a great many influences on the language of the icon and the way in which it is painted – the conditions in which the church is operating, events and cataclysms affecting people's lives, global doctrinal issues. Certain elements remained constant throughout the whole of the Middle Ages, they simply underwent a process of refinement and crystallisation. What we see in the catacombs are not icons but frescoes. The earliest icons to have survived intact go back only to the 6th century. The 3rd and 4th century frescoes in the catacombs possess a conventionality of space, or "shallow" space. The influence of divinity is evident here in the fact that the celestial world is alongside us, quite close to us; we are given a theological interpretation of an event, we see the face of a saint. Of course some things are not depicted – for example, initially at the time of the persecu-





tions of the early Christians aureoles were not painted and often there were no inscriptions because the artists had to conceal what was depicted in the icon.

The early Byzantine period (4th–7th centuries) added a great deal. During this period the decisive language of icon painting was established, but a whole series of processes would occur during the period of iconoclasm. It is after the triumph of Orthodoxy that we see the renaissance of the icon of the 11th–12th centuries, when the icon depicts a more settled condition, a reflection of the fact that the Church is victorious. The depictions are almost without movement, but this denotes not an ossified rigidity but the stillness of the tranquillity of the Lord.

Something else becomes manifest in the icons of the 13th century, when Constantinople had been destroyed and the Tartar hordes began their assault on Rus. Here the world is

**Metropolitan Hilarion, Primate of the Russian Church Abroad, came to London for the dedication of the new iconostasis. The picture shows Father Luka presenting the icon of the Dormition of the Mother of God to Vladyka Hilarion**

already being perceived as something temporary – everything is unstable. There is more energy, more movement, a particular attitude towards prayer, towards worship, including the Eucharist. The theme of the Eucharist is highlighted in the icons, painting techniques appear which have a particularly bright line which speaks of celestial light, making celestial light stand out much more clearly than in the previous period.

The icon underwent no further changes, in spite of the fall of Byzantium and enormous changes in Rus. Among the most significant of these processes was the influence of the West, which had, of course, existed previously, in the 13th century, at the time of the

crusaders, but it was not as significant then as it was after the fall of wByzantium. The Western icon had an influence on the Greeks and through the Greeks it came to influence Rus. Sometimes the Western influence was within the bounds of what was permissible, but sometimes it destroyed the traditional perception, bringing a certain verisimilitude and psychological approach to the icon. The icon painters, of course, tried to prevent this, and to sweep away anything which was totally unacceptable.

The 19th–20th centuries in Rus saw the beginning of the process of the rebirth of the ancient icon, which genuinely aids prayer, unlike the purely painterly icon which may be beautiful and distracting, and may even rise above this world, but at the same time does not aid prayer. This process did not come about by accident: in the 18th–19th centuries men of faith prayed before icons with their eyes cast down. This was how Venerable Seraphim of Sarov and very many saints prayed. They felt, possibly without even realising it, that icons painted in this way would not assist their prayer, so they lowered their eyes and prayed before, rather than through the icon to the Prototype.

**Q: Am I right in thinking that the Western icon painting traditions are connected with the artistic tradition? For example, the medieval painters Breugel and Cranach followed specific canons when creating their paintings. Did this religious art influence Western icon painting, which then, as you say, came over into the Orthodox icon?**

**A:** It all began in the Pre-Renaissance period, when Giotto and other artists were inspired by ancient pagan art which they attempted to imitate. This took various forms. The artists were inspired by the harmony of the ancient world and the icon took many characteristics of pagan art, something sublime but nevertheless of the heart and of the earth. An icon which is true to life cannot rise above itself. It

can be a helpful distraction in taking us away from the cares of this world but that is all.

**Q: You mentioned the different emphases which a particular age lends to the very best icon painting. Nevertheless I expect that there are some icons which stand out and which enjoy huge popularity. When you are teaching people who are training to be icon painters do you guide them as to what emphases they should use today, and how they relate to the modern world?**

**A:** Although we live in an amazing, complex and unique age it's impossible to say that even in secular art there is some unified movement which is typical of our age as opposed to the 19th century. Ours is the age of imitation, there is no sign of uniformity in art. The situation is virtually the same in religious art. It's hard to say whether this is a good or a bad thing. The icons being painted by Russian, Greek and non-Orthodox Christian artists are very different, although they all look to the Middle Ages. Some look to the Russian Orthodox icon and some to other traditions, those of the Byzantine or Coptic icon. Such are the times in which we live.

**Q: And what do you take as your guide?**

**A:** Our school of icon painting takes its lead from the Moscow icon of the 14th–15th centuries. This is the most recent ascendant period of icon painting, the one which is nearest to us simply because we have more opportunities to study the icon of this period. Just as it is important for a theologian to study the Holy Fathers in order to be able to say something important himself, the same is true for an icon painter. Unless he studies examples from antiquity his icon will be weak, lacking in power, less interesting in terms of colour, less joyful, less paschal, or, on the other hand, less ascetic. The school of icon painting puts a great deal of emphasis on studying the experience of our predecessors,



by making copies and replicas and doing restoration work in museums and studios. The more contact an icon painter has with ancient icons, the more productive he will be and the more interesting his work will be.

**Q: How clearly defined now are the boundaries between the schools of icon painting? For example, if we look back into history there are very clear boundaries which distinguish the Moscow and the Northern schools. Today, if you do not know the origin of an icon can you identify to which school it belongs, or is there no perceptible boundary between, say, your school and schools from other regions?**

**A:** These days the boundaries are more fluid. Novgorod, Pskov and Moscow icons differed from one another because life was different in each of the three cities. For example, Pskov was a border city, located on the border with the West, whereas Moscow was the successor to Byzantium, and this comes across in the icon. These days much of the distinction has been ironed out, although some schools do retain some distinguishing features. Today we can talk about the Greek icon and the Russian icon, distinguishable from one another due to the national consciousness which is reflected in the icon. In Ukraine I have seen hardly any icons based on Ukrainian art of the 15th–16th centuries. Their artists look either to Byzantium or to Moscow. For example, the Pskov artists also look more to Moscow rather than to the ancient Pskov icon.

**Q: What are the stages of training for icon painters today? Some people say that any artistic education which someone has had before they start painting icons is sometimes more of a hindrance than a help to them.**

**A:** Education can be a hindrance, but more often the opposite is true. Secular education is the foundation. The entrance examinations for our school pay a great deal of attention

to the student's mastery of composition, drawing and colour. Of course, if someone cannot leave secular painting behind, if for them to pursue this kind of art would be closer to their heart and would mean more to them than studying icon painting, then of course this can be a hindrance. We have had instances in the school when one or two students who had a good secular education could just not make that breakthrough within themselves and become icon painters. You do have to love the icon; it's not just a question of adopting and loving Orthodoxy, you have to love the style of the icon, the ancient view of the world. Not everyone can do this, but, generally, education is a help. Once a person decides to make this fundamental change in their life and become an icon painter, this in itself is a guarantee that they will succeed.

**Q: How important is technique in icon painting – from the brushstrokes to the art of mixing the paints?**

**A:** Unless modern paints are egg tempera they are not as lively as they should be. This has an effect on the subconscious, and sometimes a certain poster-like quality in modern icons means that they are perceived more as a picture than as life in Christ. Art educates us. This is something which we don't always recognise, but a truly beautiful icon, a joyous icon painted in accordance with tradition, helps us to understand Orthodoxy, its life, the ascetic as well as the joyous and paschal. Therefore the actual paints and how they are applied, the way the icon is finished, give us a great deal. It is very important for icon painters to understand this.

There are many reasons why a modern icon can fail to move us. If the life of the icon painter does not match his vocation, if he has not experienced the prayer which is captured in the paints, if he has not prayed deeply, this is evident in the icon. An icon which is true to Orthodoxy in all its depth both moves and uplifts us. We do not relate to it simply as a church decoration.

**Q: There is a traditional view that an icon is a window into the next world, and so the artistic quality of the icon is not very important. What is important is that the icon should connect the sublime and the worldly.**

**In this respect the icon painter is like the priest performing the Holy Liturgy, and the mystery occurs irrespective of his personal qualities. To what extent is this true? Is it the case that once it has been dedicated any icon becomes a “conduit” for the Grace of God and a window into the next world?**

**A:** Of course the Lord can perform miracles through saints and sinners alike, but at the same time everyone wants to be in touch with the holy. An encounter with the Lord is important no matter through whom it may occur, but the “conduit” is also important. We must show in our lives and in our art the Kingdom of Heaven, the celestial world.

It's no accident that in the 20th century the icon was in demand once again. People today do not have faith in words, but true art never lies, especially if it is created from the heart and is not merely a formal creation. Father Pavel Florensky once said that once Rublev's “Trinity” exists, then God exists. Rublev's icon is genuine evidence of God which has real value in the 20th century. When we contemplate the icon we can see that behind this depiction lies the true reality.

**Q: What do you think of paper icons?**

**A:** I suppose that it was inevitable that we would have paper icons today. They are not very good because of their poor colour reproduction, but their main drawback is that they don't last, and according to the Venerable Maxim the Greek an icon should be long-lasting. We don't know exactly what the Holy

Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council had in mind but they determined that an icon must be made from an “appropriate substance” in keeping with the importance of the task.

**Q: How does an icon painter combine his own individuality with the fact that in an icon everything must be expressed objectively, with a grace whose source is independent of the artist? To what extent can an icon painter show his own individuality?**

**A:** Of course an icon painter, unlike a secular artist, has a fundamentally different challenge: to convey the world of God to a person in prayer. It is inevitable that the creation of the icon painter comes from his heart, and this is reflected in the icon. An icon painted by a brilliant painter can be a reference point for many people.

For example, the Venerable Andrei Rublev more than anyone else before him, contributed to the creation of the Moscow style of icon painting. He created an icon possessing specifically Russian features: softness, lyricism, tenderness, while at the same time, like the icons of Constantinople, characterised by regal grandeur, a sense of aristocracy and refinement. It is no accident that at the beginning of the 16th century the Venerable Joseph Volotsky said that his icons were the most valuable thing in his monastery. Nor is it any accident that the Fathers of the Great Council ruled that the ancient Byzantine icon painters and Andrei Rublev should serve as the model for icon painting. In his lifetime Andrei Rublev was rated less highly by his contemporaries than Theophanes the Greek, Prokhor from Gorodetz and Danill Cherny, but being younger than these masters Rublev was probably much better at giving expression to the hopes of the faithful. ■



# THE DELUSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

The orthodox atheist versus indifference

*Sergey Khudiev*

“**T**HE GOD DELUSION” by the British writer, *Richard Dawkins*, has recently been published in Russian. An eminent biologist, Dawkins has become much more famous as a passionate exponent of atheism. But Dawkins is interesting in yet another respect – he expounds something which may be called “orthodox atheism”. There are many different types of atheists, but it is possible to identify a particular set of views and arguments which typify the atheist critique of Christianity. These views and arguments are repeated time after time, so much so that they have become something akin to an “atheist canon”, and Dawkins expounds this canon quite consistently. There are three lines of argument running through this canon: firstly, that Christianity (and religion in general) are socially harmful, secondly, that modern science has made Christianity intellectually untenable, and thirdly, that the Bible cannot serve as a moral authority. Let us briefly consider each of these three lines of argument as they are presented by Dawkins, beginning with science.

## “RED AIRMEN FLEW THROUGH THE SKY...”

People are inclined to distort views which they do not share. Believers and non-believers alike are capable of committing this particular intellectual sin. Popular atheism – and in particular the atheism of Dawkins – is built on a distorted image of Christianity. Its entire scientific argument is based on a fundamental (although possibly unconscious) error of substitution. Dawkins

states (and this is fundamental to all his reasoning) that the existence of God can be subjected to examination by natural sciences: “The presence or absence of a creative super-intelligence is unequivocally a scientific question, even if it is not in practice – or not yet – a decided one. So also is the truth or falsehood of every one of the miracle stories that religions rely upon to impress multitudes of the faithful.” We can stop there, because all his subsequent arguments are based on this premise, but the premise itself is simply erroneous, and this is perhaps the fundamental error in “scientific atheism”. Natural science uses a method based on repeated observations and reproducible experiments, a method which is entirely respectable, reliable and useful in its field. But what the “scientific atheists” preach is not science as such, but a specific philosophy, sitting somewhere between vulgar materialism and scientism. This philosophy supposes that natural science is the only measure of truth and the only source of our ideas on the question of who we are, what our place in the world is, and how we should act. The whole of “scientific atheism” (both as practised by Soviet propagandists and in the arguments formulated by writers like Dawkins) is based on the premise that natural sciences are qualified to pass judgment on the existence of God, on morals, on human destiny, and, moreover, that only these judgments are worthy of being taken into consideration.

Is such a world view scientific in the proper sense of the word? Can its claims be substantiated by scientific methods?

Can we establish its truth simply through observations and experiments? Absolutely not. Even at the level of our own personal experience we are perfectly aware that the truth does not equate to a natural science truth. “Bach is a great composer” is the truth, but this truth has no relation to natural science. It is an aesthetic experience which you can go through (or not, if you prefer, for example, Verka Serdiuchka). Or to take another truth: “N is my old, faithful friend.” Can this truth be demonstrated scientifically? “We should give succour to the weak” – is another truth which is outside the realms of science. Can we substantiate these different truths within the framework of the scientific method? Obviously not. There are questions to which science in general and natural science in particular has no answer. For example, science cannot examine the actions of individuals – will Maria marry Ivan, or will she prefer Peter, or will she give up the world altogether and go to live in a convent. Therefore to a question which is perfectly sensible and, which we must assume, is of vital importance to Ivan, science has no answer.

In refusing to acknowledge something which is beyond the realms of science we are behaving like the character in the novel “The Box Man” by the Japanese writer, Kobo Abe: we are perceiving reality through a narrow opening. If we look at the world through this narrow opening we will not see God, but we will also fail to see a whole mass of other things. For example, since our knowledge of historical events cannot be based on observations and experiments (here natural sciences can only help us indirectly), we will not see everything that relates to moral or aesthetic experience, the experience of personal relations and a great deal more.

Natural processes show us that we live in a highly ordered world which is developing according to well-defined and rationally comprehensible laws. At the

same time this very order is such that it ensures the existence of life and therefore the very person capable of recognising those laws (this fact has become known as “the anthropic cosmological principle”). However, God is not one of these natural processes. God is not just one natural phenomenon among a number of other phenomena. We cannot subject God to experiments or make Him show Himself against His will.

This amusing atheistic argument was popular in the early years of Bolshevism: “Red airmen have flown across the sky and they did not see Angels or God anywhere.” We would probably just laugh at such an argument, but when an argument like this is put forward with reference to “radio telescopes” and “the latest scientific achievements” it is often taken seriously, as if people really do expect that although God was able to dodge aeroplanes, we will finally be able to take Him by surprise with the help of an especially powerful telescope.

God, as he is described in the Bible, cannot be “taken by surprise” or “caught” if He does not want to be. He reveals Himself to people as He wants to, for His own purposes. And His purpose is to return people to a redeeming relationship with Him, to a relationship of trust and love, in which there can be no place for observations or experiments.

There can, of course, be no “scientific proof” of the existence of God without His will. God, who has given us a great deal of evidence of Himself, has not given us any unassailable proof, the kind of proof from which there is no escape. He has given us enough evidence to allow us to take an informed decision. But this evidence is fundamentally non-coercive. We may, if we so desire, refute any arguments and reject any evidence. Any miracle can be declared to be a trick, any experience – illusory, any evidence – falsified. Why has God not forced us into faith? Because He has created



us for a trusting, close relationship with Him, which can only be unconstrained, and this is the very reason why it is possible for us to ignore Him or to deny His existence completely. But let us move on to the second of the arguments used by atheists – the supposed social harm caused by religion.

### **“THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL”**

This was the title of a BBC series presented by Dawkins. In his book he asks us to imagine a world without religion. “Imagine: no suicide bombers, no 9/11, no 7/7, no Crusades, no witch-hunts, no Gunpowder Plot, no Indian partition, no Israeli/Palestinian wars, no Serb/Croat/Muslim massacres, no persecution of Jews as ‘Christ-killers’, no Northern Ireland ‘troubles’, no evangelists fleecing gullible people of their money. Imagine: no Taliban to blow up ancient statues, no public beheadings of blasphemers, no flogging of female skin for the crime of showing an inch of it.”

In general it is possible to agree that in a world without religion no Taliban would have destroyed the Buddhist statues – because there would be no Buddhism – and no-one would persecute Jews – because there would be no Jews or other peoples, civilisations or cultures created by religions. However the author is probably not thinking so much about this as about the fact that religion is the source of all evil. The author is not aware that “honour killings”, territorial conflicts or militant nationalism get by perfectly well without any religion; it is as if he is predisposed towards attributing all evil occurring in non-atheistic societies specifically to religion.

Can we find examples in history of atrocities committed in the name of religion? Of course; even in the Gospel the Lord tells us: “yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:2). Is faith in God the cause of these crimes? We have a completely scientific way of verifying this.

There is a clear way of establishing whether factor X is responsible for phenomenon Y – that is to identify whether the phenomenon in question continues once the specific factor has been eliminated. If we have arrested the “killer doctors” and yet the patients have become worse, we have probably sinned in vain against the doctors. If a suspect has been caught and executed but the serial killings continue, it means that we have apprehended the wrong person. If, finally, we do away with religion and with believers, but the disasters and atrocities previously ascribed to religion not only do not cease but actually become more widespread, it follows that religion was not the problem. The argument about “the atrocities of history” sounded quite impressive when used by the key figures in the Age of the Enlightenment. They (and their audience) had nothing by way of comparison. But soon Europe was to witness no less staggering crimes committed in the name of Enlightenment and Reason. The “infernal columns” of General Turreau carried out the Franco-French genocide in the Vendée, and revolutionary soldiers shot nuns for refusing to renounce their vows. Since then, experience of French, Spanish, Mexican, and particularly Russian atheism, has shown that fanatical persecution, slaughter, tyranny and witch-hunts have been carried out on a far greater scale under an anti-religious banner than in the name of religion.

It was not the clergy who shot atheists at the Butovo Range – precisely the opposite. The reality of history is such that atheistic fanatics have murdered more people than Islamic extremists and the Catholic inquisitors together. I do not mean to imply by this that all atheists are bloodthirsty fanatics (that is absolutely not true!) but I am simply asking people to bear in mind that the most destructive forms of fanaticism have been atheistic rather than religious. To consider hatred, fanaticism and persecution

as the product of religion, and moreover to recommend atheism as a cure for all these troubles, is to declare that the whole history of Russia (and not only Russia) in the 20th century did not happen.

How does Dawkins respond to this historical reality? It would seem that the crimes of atheist dictatorships still do not prove the existence of God, that it is possible to be an atheist and still to recognise those crimes. But Dawkins' response is different: he does not confront them head-on. Even though this is rather strange for a man who so eloquently praises scientific and intellectual honesty, this is how he responds.

He writes: "I do not believe there is an atheist in the world who would bulldoze Mecca – or Chartres or York Minster or Notre Dame, the Shwe Dagon, the temples of Kyoto, or, of course, the Buddhas of Bamiyan." Against the background of 20th century history (especially, but not only, that of Russia) these words sound extremely contemptuous. I do not believe that Dawkins is consciously lying, nor do I think that he is in a state of honest ignorance. To judge by the comments on the BBC forum, his opponents have probably enlightened him in some detail as to the actual facts of the matter, and they do not miss any opportunity to remind him of those facts. In spite of everything, Dawkins believes that nowhere in the world will you find an atheist capable of demolishing historic monuments – and he believes sincerely, with pathos, with deep conviction, with a sense of sincere rightness and full awareness of the fact that he, unlike some others, is acting with intellectual good faith. People are disposed to glaring self-deception, and, as we can see, atheism does not spare them this in the least. It is convenient for people to believe that they have finally uncovered the source of all adversity and trouble, and when the facts do not fit in to such a convenient and simple picture of the world, they simply ignore them. It is difficult to ignore the demolished

churches in Russia, Spain, Mexico and many other countries; it is difficult to ignore the monasteries which have been turned into concentration camps; it is difficult to ignore the thousands and thousands of martyrs killed by atheists and for their faith in God, but Dawkins and his followers manage to ignore them quite successfully.

### THE ATHEIST'S BIBLE

Another line of argument used by Dawkins (and a fairly characteristic one) is to challenge the Bible as a moral authority. In his view, many Biblical narratives give us an example of glaring immorality. Before examining this in more detail let us look at one interesting thing in particular. In the 18th century Dawkins' fellow-countryman, William Wilberforce, together with his friends, struggled for decades to get the British parliament to ban the slave trade, and he succeeded. What inspired this man, in his own words? The Bible. What inspired Doctor Friedrich Haas to devote his life to the care of prisoners? The Bible. What has led wealthy Russian merchants to invest their money not in yachts and football clubs but in hospitals and homes for the poor? This self-same Bible. The examples can be multiplied over and over again: what is clear is that for many people the Bible has served as a moral authority, directing their lives towards goodness, which even non-believers cannot refute. If in this same Book atheists perceive every kind of evil and barbarity, it means that they must be reading it differently. In this, as in many other instances, the problem here is that they criticise that idea of the Bible which it suits them to criticise. This idea can be summarised as follows: "The Bible is a collection of moral formulae, the actions of a few Old Testament characters are no use as moral formulae for modern man; consequently the Bible cannot be a moral authority." What is wrong with this argument? The Bible is not a collection of formulae; it does not offer up for our



admiration ideal heroes who perform ideal deeds in ideal conditions. Such sugar-sweet books do exist for children, but the main problem with them is that they have no relation to real life. The Bible gives dramatic accounts of the interactions between real, live people and God. These people are sinners; many of them belong to archaic and, to our eyes, barbaric cultures – but God does not have any other people, it was precisely these people that He came to save. Human history is profoundly tragic, sometimes even abhorrent – but God is part of this very history. The striking truth of the Bible is that it never embellishes the people whom God came to save. Anyone looking in the Scripture for examples of penitence and faith will find them; anyone looking for something to tempt them will also find it, sometimes even in the same Biblical characters. What you are looking for in the Book is a question not for the Book but for the reader.

We must acknowledge that people like Dawkins do bring a particular benefit. The challenge to Christian faith comes not from atheism but from indifference. People who make violent attacks on the Gospel do something very important: they make people ask themselves whether God exists, whether eternal salvation (and death) are real, whether human life has meaning and purpose. The ways of Providence are sometimes unexpected, and Christians often testify that it was actually these anti-Christian writers who played a large part in their conversion, by prompting them to consider “the ultimate questions”.

Therefore we have reason to welcome the appearance of this book – the passion and fury with which it is written demonstrate Dawkins’ serious attitude towards the God whose reality he disputes. There are those scientists who, like Dawkins, reject God, and there are those, like, for example, the modern geneticist Francis Collins, who believe in Him. God does not compel human will, and a person may decide not to believe. But it would be wrong to think that this decision has some kind of scientific basis.

### POPPER’S PRINCIPLE OF FALSIFIABILITY

According to the criterion put forward by the philosopher of science, Karl Popper, scientific assertions are distinguishable from non-scientific assertions by the principle of falsifiability. According to this principle it must be possible to refute a theory by performing an experiment, even if that experiment has not been performed. For example, the assertion that “mice generate spontaneously in mouldy grain” can be refuted by means of an experiment, while the assertion that “in the world there is nothing apart from matter in motion” cannot be refuted by experiment. The second assertion is, therefore, beyond the realms of science. ■

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English translation © “Sourozh”*

# LIFE AS SERVICE

*Bishop Vasily (Rodzianko) died 10 years ago*

*Fr Michael Dudko*

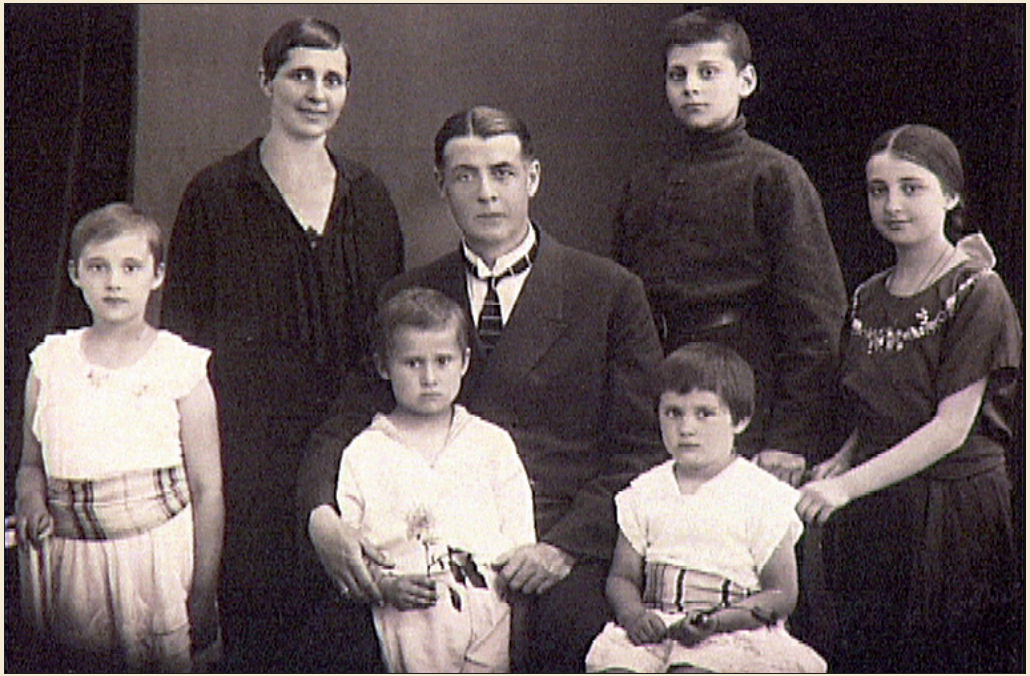


*The life of Vldyka Vasily embodied the history of his age. The grandson of the Chairman of the Duma, he himself knew all the key figures in the Russian Church abroad and took an active part in the major events of the life of the church. He never forgot Russia and did all he could to help her*

**I**t is 10 years since the death of the eminent Russian bishop, pastor and preacher Bishop Vasily (Rodzianko). He was born in Russia in 1915, the grandson of Mikhail Vladimirovich Rodzianko who was Chairman of the 3rd and 4th Congresses of the State Duma. The future Bishop Vasily left Russia at the age of four with his parents, living first in Bulgaria before settling in Serbia. He and his family lived here for many years, and it was here that he married Maria Vasilievna Kolyubaeva. She was from

a priest's family and they lived a long life together until her death in London in 1978.

His kinship with Mikhail Rodzianko, accused by many members of the White movement of treason against Tsar Nicholas II, played a significant role in the fate of Bishop Vasily. The Bishop himself wrote in his memoirs that one of the reasons he became a priest was because he wanted to pray before the Throne of God to atone for the sin of his grandfather, who had asked the Tsar to abdicate, but, on his own admission



The Rodzianko family. The future Bishop Vasily is second from the right



The wedding of Vladimir Rodzianko and Maria Kutepova



Serbia. Leading the coffin of General P. N. Vranghel, one of the leaders of the White movement, the assistant deacon on the right is Volodya Rodzianko

had not believed that this would lead to the fall of the monarchy. A year before his death the Bishop went to Tsarskoye Selo, and in the Feodorovsky Cathedral, which is closely connected with the history of his family, he said: "I ask forgiveness for my grandfather and for myself before Russia, her people, and the Imperial family, and as a Bishop, with the power vested in me by the Lord, I forgive and absolve him of this involuntary sin".

After studying at the First Classical Russo-Serbian Grammar School in Belgrade

he graduated from the theological faculty of Belgrade University, and was also educated at the Theological College attached to London University. Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) and Archbishop John (Maximovich) had a significant influence on him in his youth. When he was still a young man he was one of the key players in the reconciliation talks between Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) and Metropolitan Evlogy (Georgievsky), the heads of the two branches of the Russian Church in exile.





Back row, in the centre – Father Vladimir Rodzianko with his wife (on the right) and adopted daughter Galya (on the left). His son, Vladimir, is in the front row, wearing a white hat. Also in the front row is Priest Pyotr Belovidov



For 26 years Father Vladimir made religious programmes for the BBC

This little-known page in the history of the Russian community abroad ended with the two Metropolitans expressing their mutual penitence and each of them saying prayers of absolution for the other.

In 1941 Vasily was ordained first as a deacon then as a priest, serving as priest to the Serbian parishes in the villages of Stanishich and Miletich in Voevodino. He was also Secretary of the Red Cross. Although Father Vladimir (as the future Bishop was known before being tonsured as a monk) actually



Father Vladimir with his wife, Maria

served in the Serbian Orthodox Church from the beginning of his priesthood, he did not formally become a member of the Church's clergy until after the war.

After 1945 a new way of life began in Yugoslavia which ultimately led to the arrest of Fr Vladimir by the Yugoslavian Communist authorities for "illegal religious propaganda". In 1949 he was sentenced to eight years of hard labour but he was granted early release after only two years as a result of the intercession of the Archbishop of



**Consecration as bishop in the USA**

Canterbury. He was exiled to France and later moved to Great Britain. In London he served for 28 years as a priest in the Serbian Cathedral, and for more than 20 years he worked for the BBC, making religious broadcasts. His voice was well known to listeners throughout the USSR. In 1978 his wife died, and a year later he became a monk. He took the name of Vasily and went to live in the USA, transferring to the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church in America. Two years later he was ordained as Bishop of Washington, the Auxiliary to the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America. He was soon appointed to the Diocese of San Francisco and Western America.

Bishop Vasily did not have an easy life as a bishop in America. The comments about him by Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann, are well known: "I find this honey-sweet spiritual way of speaking which is inherent in Orthodoxy quite unbearable." His retirement in 1984 was also the result of the difference in the approach to church



**The first photograph following his consecration as bishop**





After a service in Fort Ross, a former Russian settlement in California



At home in Washington with the produce from his small kitchen garden



Palm Sunday in the Donskoy Monastery (Moscow)



service between the Bishop and several influential figures in the American Church. However the Bishop still had plenty of energy which he continued to devote to serving the Church. Among the most impressive episodes of his life are the seminars which he conducted with a group of Protestants who were studying the Eastern Christian churches. The size of his audience grew steadily, and as a result around three thousand people joined the Orthodox Church of their own volition.

In 1981 the Bishop visited the USSR for the first time since leaving his homeland at the age of four. He subsequently returned many times, often staying for a long time. He resumed his broadcasts for Russia on “Voice of America” and “Vatican Radio”, a role which he held to be very important and in which he had vast professional experience. He gave a series of television interviews in Russia on religious issues. He presented several religious films. He gave many lectures, and from 1998 became Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the Natalia Nesterova University. The Bishop also gave lectures for students at theological schools when living at the Troitse-Sergiev Monastery in 1996 and working on his book “The Theory of the Big Bang and the Faith of the Holy Fathers” about the relationship between faith and scientific knowledge. But worship remained the focal point of his life. He once said: “As long as I can stand before the Holy Table and conduct the liturgy, I will be alive, but otherwise there is nothing to live for.” He conducted his last service just two weeks before his death, supported by his assistant deacons. Everyone who met this amazing man was struck by his goodness, his loyalty to his pastoral duty, his striking humility and at the same time by his intellectual robustness and independence of judgment. He was a true “good shepherd” who gave his soul for his flock. ■

*Photographs courtesy of the University of Natalia Nesterova*



With Natalia Nesterova, dean of a university in Moscow in which Vladyka founded a faculty of theology



With the Holy Flame in the Kremlin



Bishop Vasily with Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

# Without a Strong Family We Are Doomed

*Bishop Vasily Rodzianko*



Father Vladimir with his wife, Maria

*The text below is a transcript of part of an interview given by **Bishop Vasily (Rodzianko)** on the subject of the family and marriage. Having spent most of his life in the West he cannot help but compare the situation here and there, and not always to our advantage. But his reflections are all imbued with a Christian, pastoral love, and a sense of pain for his native country, its people and their future*

“**M**arriage is made in paradise”. This is a quotation from the famous researcher, Professor Sergei Viktorovich Troitsky, and he based his words on the evidence of the Holy Fathers. But marriage today is as different from the first human marriage in paradise as heaven is from the Earth. And in this respect the fact that marriage has its origins in paradise is not so much a question of history as a challenge to us all.

We must do all we can to inherit this heavenly marriage, a marriage which is pure, holy, kind, created in the image of the Holy Trinity – father, mother and child. No matter how many families there may be, they all fall into this tripartite model, which is the basis for large families both in antiquity, in the Old Testament, and later, right up until our immediate forefathers. My mother was one of nine children. She had thirteen cousins. In my own family my parents had eight children of whom I was one. But today we see families in which there are either no children, or one child or two, hardly ever more. It can be that there are no children at all.

I lived for many years in England, and up until the 1960s the family held a very important position. This is particularly evident in English literature, for example in the wonderful “Forsyte Saga” by John Galsworthy. What was it that connected families? The knowledge that the family is instituted by God, that without the family there can be no real life, no society,

no humankind, no country. And also the fact that the small family is related to the large Christian family, namely the Christian Church.

I remember this from when I came to England as a student in 1933, doing my postgraduate studies and working as a postgraduate student attached to London University and a college of the Anglican Church. That was when my wife and I got to know the English family. But England was totally different then from the way it is today.

We noticed the change when we were in England again after the war, in the 1960s. The whole country was in the grip of a wild permissiveness, authority had broken down, and with the breakdown of authority came the breakdown of the family. Of course there still are wonderful families today, and that is why I still retain the hope that this country will rise up out of this improbable turmoil to which it succumbed in the 1960s.

Russia has other problems. I know from statistics that in the USSR a woman would have on average seven abortions in the course of her life. Sometimes women did not have any children, but they did have abortions. This is a crime against the nation. What have we come to? Specialists tell us that the country is in a terrible demographic situation because the death rate is higher than the birth rate. The birth rate is falling, as a result of abortions, and abortions are based on a totally false situation which from a scientific perspective relates more to the 19th than the 20th century. It is as if the baby growing in the mother's womb is not yet a person and therefore we may kill it. Once it is born it may not be killed, then it is murder and a crime. But may we kill a child in the mother's womb? Why? On the grounds that it is not yet a person. But this is not true! Modern science is very clear on this issue.

It is not long ago, within the lifetime of our generation, that the science of genetics began to develop. This science shows us

that immediately, instantly, as soon as the male and female cells join together, the life of a new human being begins in the womb. In its DNA this human being has a special unique personal code. This code contains the imprints not only of the personal characteristics of the child but of the family in which it was conceived, and not only the family, but the people and humankind in general. The embryo, the microscopic human seed in which everything is contained, holds a mysterious manuscript in which the text is written in a special code, the genetic code, created by the will of God.

Even before birth each human being already carries within itself the character which will become manifest once he or she are born, and which will mark out the person's character throughout his or her whole life. But what do we mean by "character"? The word comes from the Greek word "kharakter", meaning manuscript. It would appear that from the earliest times, before genes and DNA, people already understood that a person's character is contained within them like a manuscript. From the moment of birth this manuscript, "kharakter" in Greek and "character" in English, becomes more and more visible.

When I think about the family, about my own large family, and how the Lord guided us through difficult times, when I see the sad, distorted families created by our unhappy 20th century, I have to say that we must come to our senses now, today, before it is too late. If we fail to do all that we can to give new life to the real, good, strong, loving, decent family in Russia, if we do not have as many children as people did in the 19th century, the Russian nation is doomed to extinction.

I know that our Church is very concerned about this issue, but everyone, church and non-church people alike, must work together on this – it is a matter of life and death. Today the family needs to be the main focus of every person who loves their country, and, of course, of every Christian. ■



# From the History of the London Parish: Father Nicholas Behr

*Evgeny Tugarinov*

Russian emigration in the 20th century is not a chance phenomenon but one of profound providential significance. The October Revolution of 1917 brought suffering, grief and the loss of their homeland to hundreds of thousands of Russian people who were carried off to all the corners of the earth by the wave of civil war, the “red terror” and the edicts of the Council of People’s Commissars. At the same time the mass exodus of Russians in the 20th century was in its own way a spiritual mission which was deeply rooted in the Church. The West received a powerful “injection” of Orthodoxy, of a culture that was of Russian origin, which spread throughout the whole world.

The centres of Russian emigration in Eastern and Western Europe were the Orthodox countries of Serbia and Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and also Germany and France. These countries which for many years had enjoyed wide-ranging relations with Russia, including spiritual relations, became home for hundreds of thousands of Russian émigrés. People sought not only shelter and protection but the opportunity to continue to lead the same spiritual life which they had been accustomed to leading in their homeland. They were drawn to the churches and cathedrals of Belgrade, Sofia, Prague, Munich, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Paris and Nice as to their spiritual home.

Because of its relative geographical isolation from the continent, its political orientation and especially for understandable reasons of economic expediency, Great Britain did not represent such a hospitable

country for Russian émigrés as the states mentioned above, but nevertheless it became home for several thousand Russian refugees. Many of them found comfort and assistance in the Russian church in London – the successor to the embassy chapel which had become a parish church in 1919.

The Russian parish in London was founded by the Greeks in the early 18th century. With the death of the first Greek Rectors the Synod sent Russian Rectors and Readers to London. In the middle of the 19th century a deacon was added to the clergy of the London embassy chapel,

## Rectors of the Russian Church in London

|                                 |           |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Archimandrite Gennadius         | 1716-1737 |
| Hieromonk Bartholemew (Cassano) | 1737-1746 |
| Archpriest Antipa Martinianov   | 1746-1749 |
| Priest Stefan Ivanovsky         | 1749-1765 |
| Hieromonk Efrem (Dyakovsky)     | 1766-1768 |
| Archpriest Andrey Samborsky     | 1768-1780 |
| Archpriest Yakov Smirnov        | 1780-1840 |
| Archpriest Evgeny Popov         | 1842-1875 |
| Priest Vasily Popov             | 1875-1877 |
| Archpriest Evgeny Smirnov       | 1877-1923 |
| Archpriest Ioann Lelyukhin      | 1923-1926 |
| Archbishop Serafim (Lukyanov)   | 1926      |
| Archpriest Nicholas Behr        | 1926-1940 |
| Archpriest Vladimir Theokritoff | 1940-1950 |
| Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom)    | 1950-2003 |

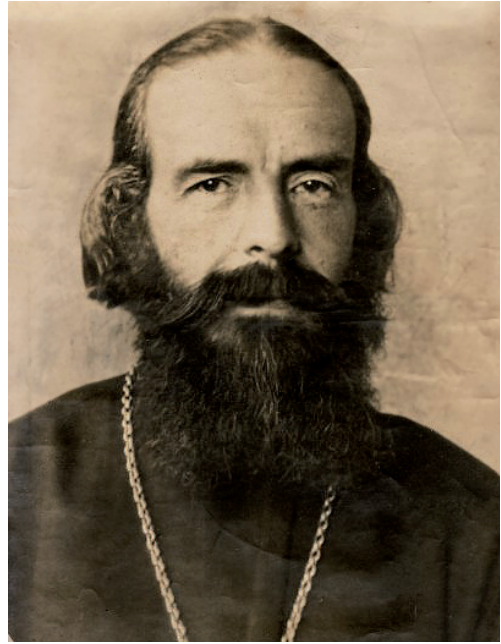
whose numbers grew again by the end of the century with the addition of four choristers who made up a male quartet. The Rectors of the London church addressed their petitions and requests to the Russian ambassador in London and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in St Petersburg.

The subject of this article is a comparatively little-known period in the history of the Russian Church in London during the 1920s and 1930s. For the London parish this difficult post-revolutionary time is associated above all with the name of Archpriest Nicholas Behr (Nikolai Alexeyevich Behr), whose service as Rector of the London Orthodox Church of St Philip (1926–1940) deserves to be remembered with our gratitude and in our prayers.

On the Day of Rejoicing 2008, having made my way to Old Brompton Cemetery to the graves of Vladyka Anthony and the brothers Archpriest V. I. Theokritoff and choirmaster M. I. Theokritoff, I came across a rather old wooden cross with an inscription that here lay Archpriest Nicholas Behr, his wife and son. This discovery aroused my interest in Fr Nicholas and led me to ask: who was this man? On the same day, in London's Chiswick Cemetery I found the grave of his daughter, Olga Nikolayevna Behr, and that same evening I managed to contact Fr Nicholas's grandson, Andrey Alexeyevich Behr, by telephone. He agreed to meet me, to talk about his family, and to bring some family photographs.

My meeting with Andrey Alexeyevich provided the inspiration and the basic material for this article. Later I recalled the details of conversations and meetings with other representatives of this family, Fr Nicholas's daughter, Olga Nikolayevna Behr and his daughter-in-law Tatiana Borisovna Behr, which allowed me to build up a more complete picture of the events of this interesting period.

This article is therefore the account provided by A. A. Behr, supplemented as necessary by excerpts from the "Service



Archpriest Nicholas Behr. London, 1920s

### Nikolai Alexeyevich Behr

*Archpriest (1881–1940), Guards officer, diplomat, worked as a diplomat in Brussels before the First World War, in the post of First Secretary to the Embassy. He was in Belgium at the time of the 1917 Revolution and did not return to his homeland, becoming a refugee with his family. Settled in Germany. Ordained as a deacon by Archbishop Evlogy (Georgievsky) and as a priest by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) in June 1921 in Berlin. Served as a parish priest in Tegel (a suburb of Berlin). Came under the authority of Vladyka Evlogy who sent him to serve as Rector in London in 1926. Died in March 1940. Buried in Old Brompton Cemetery in London. Wife Maria Vasilievna Behr died in London in 1966, son Alexey (1912–1969), a biologist, daughter Olga (1914–2006).*



Family grave of the Behrs at the Novodevichy Convent Cemetery

Records of the Churches Abroad”, fragments of the book by Metropolitan Evlogy (Georgievsky) “The Way of My Life” and explanations from the author.

### From a conversation with A. A. Behr, July 3rd 2008, London

**Question:** *Andrey Alexeyevich, please tell me about your ancestors, about the family of Fr Nicholas.*

**Andrey Behr:** *There were three children in the Behr family: Nikolai (the future Fr Nicholas), Mikhail and Ekaterina. The brothers were officers and were close to the Tsar. Behr is a very old family name, going back 300 years. The origins of the name date from the time of Peter the Great. The Behrs were Germans. They came to Russia, served in the army, and defended Russia against her enemies, against Napoleon.*

*The maiden name of Fr Nicholas’s widow, my grandmother, Maria Vasilievna, was Polovtseva. She*

*came from a very noble family, and graduated from the Smolny Institute in St Petersburg. Her father built the Siberian railway. They were even allowed to travel throughout Russia and Europe in their own carriage.*

Nikolai and Maria Behr had two children: Alexey was born in 1921 and Olga two years later. They were born in Brussels where Nikolai was working as First Secretary at the Russian Embassy after finishing his military service as an officer.

**A.B.:** *My grandfather was a very capable man and had a successful career as a diplomat, he could have become an ambassador were it not for the revolution. Olga used to tell me that during the First World War he was due to go to Belarus where the Emperor Nicholas had his headquarters, and where there were diplomats to assist and advise the Tsar. But with the outbreak of war the Behrs had to return to Russia. Once it was possible, they were sent back to Brussels – they were already back there in 1917. But soon the embassies were closed down and they became refugees.*

The family was faced with the question: where should they go? With young children, with no money, with nothing. They decided to go to Germany, Sweden, to stay with friends... Finally they settled in Germany, in Tegel near Berlin, where there were quite a number of Russian people whom they got to know, among them Vlydyka Evlogy (who at that time was still Archbishop of Volyn). They became friends. As he got to know Nikolai Behr Vlydyka Evlogy decided that he would make a good priest, and in the summer of 1921 he ordained my grandfather. At that time Fr Nicholas was 40 years old.

This is what Metropolitan Evlogy (Georgievsky) writes about Nikolai: “I took with me to the dedication a former secretary at our Embassy in Brussels, N. A. Behr, who was already approaching his ordination to the priesthood and was entitled to wear the sticharion... I ordained Behr as a deacon, and Metropolitan Anthony...





N. A. Behr and his family in the Embassy of the Russian Empire in Belgium. Brussels, 1916



N. A. Behr (second from the left), not long before his ordination as deacon. Archbishop Evlogy is in the centre. Bavaria, June 1921



Father Nicholas Behr and his wife, shortly after his ordination as a priest, among the guests of Baroness Budberg



Father Nicholas Behr among the parishioners of the "Large" Church of St Philip, London, late 1920s

ordained him as a priest. The parish of Tegel was vacant... and I appointed Fr Behr to serve there".

*A.B.: Several years went by, then one day Vladyka Evlogy invited Fr Nicholas to see him and said: "I have two parishes, in Florence and London. Where would you like to go?" Fr Nicholas answered: "My son doesn't sing, my daughter doesn't dance. We'll go to London".*

**Question: What year was that?**

*A.B.: 1926. And they left for London immediately.*

At the beginning of the 1920s the clergy of the Russian Church in London consisted of: Archpriest Evgeny Smirnov, Rector since 1877, Deacon Vladimir Theokritoff, parish chorister since 1908 and Deacon since 1914, and Reader Vasily Timofeyev, priest since 1921.

The situation which had developed in the Russian parish in London after the Revolution is described clearly by an eyewitness, Metropolitan Evlogy (Georgievsky) who visited the parish in the autumn of 1921:

"I arrived in London for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14th)... Some very painful

## Deacon Vladimir Theokritoff

*Vladimir Ivanovich Theokritoff was born on July 28th 1881 in the town of Troitsk in the province of Penza, into the family of a deacon. He attended the Penza Theological Academy and then the St Petersburg Theological Academy. In London from 1908. Sang and served in the chapel attached to the Russian Embassy. Deacon from 1914, then Senior Deacon. Parish choirmaster and Reader in the 1920s–1930s. Ordained as a priest in 1940 and Rector of the Church of St Philip in London (188, Buckingham Palace Road, Victoria, London, SW 1), and of the St Sergius Chapel attached to the Russian House (5, Brechin Place, London, SW 7).*

*From 1945 – under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. In 1947 lived in London at: 14, Clarendon Road, Holland Park, London, W 11). Died July 10th 1950. His funeral service was conducted by Hieromonk Anthony (Bloom) at the "Large" Church of St Philip. Buried at Old Brompton Cemetery alongside the main avenue on the east side (East Side, compartment 4).*

impressions awaited me in London. The Rector of the Embassy Church, the aged Archpriest Evgeny Smirnov, had not experienced the Revolution, he was used to dealing with important, distinguished people, to serving ambassadors, even in his domestic environment he retained his high-society manner and, a proud and arrogant man by nature, he could not comprehend the psychology of the migrant masses who had swept into London (mainly from the northern "white" front), he could not understand them, and all he felt was annoyance.



### Archpriest Evgeny Smirnov

*Little information has survived about Fr Evgeny Smirnov. The "Service Records of the Church Abroad" contain the following entry: "Priest Evgeny Konstantinovich Smirnov, son of the late priest of the Cathedral of the Transfiguration in Reval, Konstantin Petrov Smirnov, graduated from the St Petersburg Theological Seminary (first class) in 1867, attended a complete science course. He was a Reader in New York from June 14th 1870 (the Church of the Life-Giving Trinity) until October 29th 1873. In 1871 approved as a candidate of theology. On December 18th 1873 by a resolution of His Beatitude Isidor, Metropolitan of Novgorod and St Petersburg, appointed priest to the family chapel of Prince Nikolai Alexeyevich Orlov at the Church of St Nicholas the Miracle-Worker in Brussels. Ordained as a deacon on April 17th 1874. Ordained as a priest on April 21st 1874, sent to London as Rector on April 4th 1877".*

The Embassy Church was next to the Rector's house. Previously funeral services for the departed were not held here, since Fr Smirnov's mother could not stand their presence in the same building (the funeral services were held in the cemetery). Now such practices had to be forgotten, everything had changed. People would come to pester Fr Smirnov with new and, in his opinion, impossible requests. He was horrified. "Democracy! The Bolsheviks have arrived! They want to take over. It's mob rule..." he fumed. The émigrés grouped around their "father", Archpriest Ioann Lelyukhin, whom they had brought with them and to whom they gave preference. This was a further cause of displeasure for Fr Smirnov. Meanwhile Fr Lelyukin had to be made a curate of the Embassy Church. The Rector complained to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His suffering and indignation were genuine: he did not understand what had occurred in Russia and what the Russian people had suffered... At Parish Council meetings he

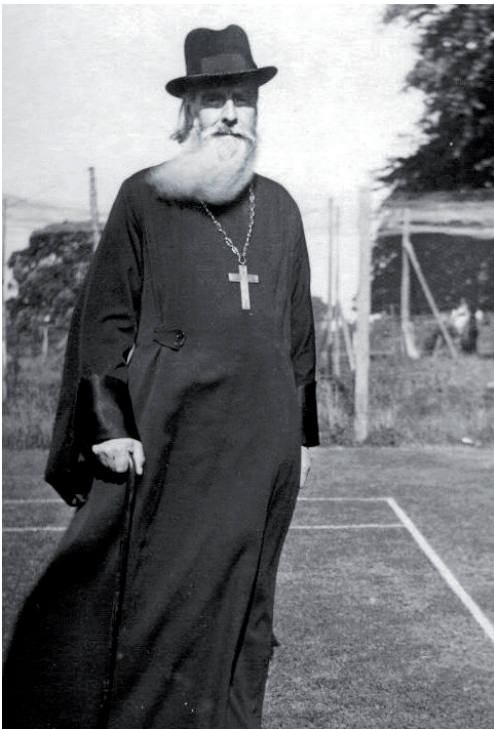
**Archpriest Nicholas Behr (in front) and Senior Deacon Vladimir Theokritoff conducting a wedding ceremony in the "Large" Church of St Philip, Buckingham Palace Road, London, late 1920s**



Yesterday's picturesque wedding at the Russian Church, Buckingham Palace-road, of Mr. Ashton Hawkins, of New York, and Miss Kyra Schett, of Brillantmont, Lausanne.



argued fervently, raised objections, and people shouted at him: “You’re nothing but a mercenary! You’re disregarding the ordinances of the All-Russian Church Council!” In short, the atmosphere around the London church had become very tense and it was clear that the elderly Rector could not handle this new church community. The old and the new were irreconcilably opposed to one another. Fr Smirnov, who was unaccustomed to heeding any claims from Readers, was now forced to listen to the claims and demands from these newly arrived Russians, who were so unlike his former very correct and well-mannered parishioners. I tried to talk him round: “be patient with them, be kind to them...” But it was hard to make Evgeny change his mind. The poor old man could not stand this onslaught of new people, and soon he fell ill and passed away.



Father Nicholas Behr, late 1930s

My overall impression was that the London parish was in serious crisis: a new life was bursting in, bringing turbulence and disorder.”

This is what Metropolitan Evlogy had to say about the mid-to-late 1920s when Nicholas Behr was Rector of the London parish:

“Following the death of Archpriest Smirnov the first Rector from the émigré population was Archpriest Ioann Lelyukhin. Against the background of a painful family drama (his wife and daughters who had remained in Russia had gone over to Communism) and overwhelmed with the grief that this caused him, he was having difficulty in coping with his ministry. To help him I ordained a local Reader, V. Timofeyev, as a priest. A graduate of the St Petersburg Theological Academy, he had lived in England for 15 years and could relate to the English. I also promoted Deacon V. Theokritoff, a very good man, with a fine voice and a fluent command of English. I made him Senior Deacon. Fr Timofeyev was not happy with his appointment as curate. I suggested to Fr Lelyukhin that he should file a request for a transfer to another parish, his friends were all against me. In the end I succeeded in having Fr Lelyukhin transferred to Florence. I should then have appointed Fr Timofeyev to the vacant position, but in order to impress the English I brought in Archbishop Serafim from Finland, who, having been deprived of his see, was living in imprisonment in a monastery on Konevets. Archbishop Serafim brought discord to the London congregation, and later lead the “Karlovatsky” group there.

We soon lost the embassy church because we did not have sufficient funds to pay the rent; then the English gave us a huge church, where following the schism we and the “Karlovatsky” group would worship each week, taking it in turns on feast days. One church, one Holy Table, but different antimensia... From one pulpit



**Father Nicholas Behr taking part in the procession during a service in Westminster Abbey for Russia in her distress. London, spring 1930**

both our preaching and the abuse of the “Karlovatsky” group towards me... An absurd situation in a religious sense, but quite fascinating from a worldly perspective.

When Archbishop Serafim left to join the opposing camp, I sent for Archpriest N. Behr from Germany, a devout and highly cultured priest. The English were entirely happy with this appointment: the Bishop of London remarked on this once in conversation with me. But Fr Timofeyev was offended by the appointment of Fr Behr and also went over to the “Karlovatsky” group. It was very difficult for the meek, quiet Fr Behr to do battle with our opponents. Meekness does not inspire the masses, and our London parish is not flourishing either spiritually or materially. The “Karlovatsky” section of the parish is in a better position materially because some of the rich business people and aristocracy

from the far right monarchists have gone over to them. The “Karlovatsky” group sends its most combative people to be Rectors in London: Bishop Nicholas got so carried away in his criticism of me that he broke his staff, and Priest B. Molchanov, one of the students from the Institute of Divinity whom I myself had ordained, takes his anti-Evlogian feelings to fanatical lengths. It is a pity that our London parish is failing to flourish, since this is a major centre of the ecumenical movement; here are all the threads that can bring us closer to the Anglican Church, and which can be sources of material help to the impoverished Russian church.”

The Behrs were penniless when they arrived in London. They had to start their lives all over again. The parish was small, consisting of only 100 people. But they helped the Behrs by giving them a house: the parish collected enough money to enable them to settle in Beckenham.





The cross on the grave of Father Nicholas Behr in Old Brompton Cemetery. London, 2008



Father Nicholas Behr with his daughter, Olga. London, mid-1930s

**Question:** Andrey Alexeyevich, please tell me about Fr Nicholas's life in London, about his service to the parish.

**A.B.:** The parish had split even before Fr Nicholas came to England. Part of the parish remained with the new Rector, Fr Nicholas, and part of it had left. But they only left in name. Where was there for them to go? The section of the parish which broke away was more wealthy, it included the Russian aristocracy, merchants... They could possibly even have bought themselves a church, but for some reason they did not. And so although the parish had split, it remained in one church – St Philip's. They took turns to worship, every Sunday. One Sunday it was Fr Nicholas, the next it was Fr Boris, and each time the "Karlovatsky" group would rededicate the altar and the church.

In spite of everything, Fr Nicholas continued his ministry, trying to perform his duties honestly and peacefully. The English church authorities thought very highly of Fr Nicholas, his culture, his breadth of vision, his lack of aggression.

In the spring of 1940, at the age of 59, Fr Nicholas died suddenly of a heart attack. His widow, Maria Vasilievna Behr, survived her husband by many years, and died in 1966. She was 84.

**Question:** Andrey Alexeyevich, please tell us something about your parents, your relatives, in other words, about those who are carrying on the Behr line.

**A.B.:** When they arrived in London the Behr children, Alexey and Olga attended school. Alexey, my father, passed his exams and went to London University to study mathematics, physics and biology. After graduating he became a biologist, but unfortunately he died young. He is buried with my grandfather and grandmother in Old Brompton Cemetery. It was at this same cemetery that my father met my mother, at the funeral of Fr Nicholas.

My mother studied at school in Paris until she was 16. But for some reason she was not very industrious. My mother preferred music and the church to school. She played the piano very well. Incidentally, there was a young man in Paris at the same time –



one Andrey Bloom, who was studying to be a doctor, the future *Vladyka Anthony*. They seem to have been part of the same group. They met at church, they had things in common. They became friends. Cecilia, the mother of my mother, *Tatiana Borisovna Behr*, was a famous violinist. She travelled a great deal, all over the world, giving concerts, and could not bring up her daughter. My mother lived with her grandmother. But what was it like with her grandmother? My mother would go out without her grandmother's knowledge. And then seeing that her studies were not working out they decided to send my mother from Paris to England.

And so my mother was sent to England, to Bristol, where they found a school for her and a family with whom she could live. A strange family, no friends around, and when you don't know anyone, you go to the church. The church was in London and my mother would go there on Sundays. There she got to know some Russian people, the family of *Anna Garret*, for example. And she became very friendly with *Fr Nicholas Behr*, she became very fond of him and often visited the family in *Beckenham*. But she did not know *Fr Nicholas's* son, *Alexey*, particularly well, for some reason he was rarely there, he loved to go out cycling. This was in the mid-1930s.

Then suddenly, in the spring of 1940, *Fr Nicholas* passed away. He had a seizure. And my mother went to his funeral at *St Philip's Church*. Then she went to the cemetery. It was raining, and she didn't have an umbrella. Gradually everyone began to disperse, but my mother remained standing by *Fr Nicholas's* fresh grave, wet through, lost in her own thoughts. Suddenly she noticed that the rain had stopped falling on her. She looked up and saw an open umbrella held by a young man. It was *Alexey Behr*, who was to be my father. That was how they met, and they were married that summer.

Now I am almost the only Behr left. My brothers *Pyotr* and *Mikhail* have died, my father and mother are dead, my brother *Nikolai* who was a priest, is dead (my aunt *Olga* was his godmother). *Nikolai's* son, my nephew, *John (Ioann Behr)*, also became a priest and is now head of the *St Vladimir Seminary* in New York. The priest's cross has passed to him from *Fr Nicholas Behr senior*. *Makrina*, the daughter of my brother *Nikolai*, is married to the son of *Archpriest Alexander Schmemann*. My



**N. A. Behr junior (grandson) with his mother, T. B. Behr and his daughter Makrina on the parvis of the Cathedral of the Dormition in London, mid-1960s**

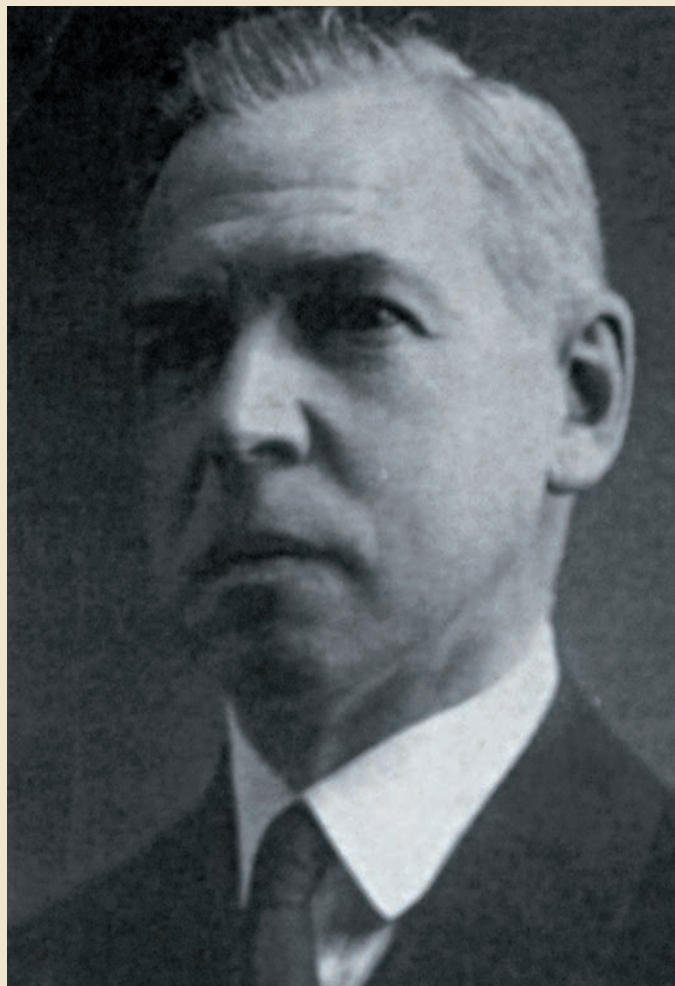
other nephew is a monk on Mount Athos. So the line of Behr priests has not died out.

It is possibly only in the church that you can meet people of different ages, situations, callings – all those who are called the Servants of God. In a church, before God, all are equal – the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the tsar and the servant. The elderly, who have belonged to a parish for a long time, who have lived through and seen so much – theirs is an invaluable contribution to human memory to which we must strive to reach out, lest all that they know be lost or forgotten, or sink into oblivion. ■

*The photographs are from the Behr family archive and are published here for the first time*

# In the Service of an Earthly King and the Heavenly King

*Fr Michael Dudko*



***Charles Sydney Gibbes** is not one of the best known figures among those who served the martyred Imperial family in the last few days of their lives, and yet this teacher of English to the heir to the throne has quite an interesting history himself: for a start, upon his return to England after the revolution, Gibbes converted to Orthodoxy, was ordained, and spent the remainder of his life in monastic orders and died as an Archimandrite in London*

Charles Sydney was born into a well off middle class devout English family. His father was a senior banker and his three elder sons followed in his footsteps. Both his sisters were married to Anglican ministers. Sidney himself graduated with an Arts degree from Cambridge, and remained there to study theology. Difficulties in finding work in England pushed him into looking for employment abroad, and Gibbes was especially drawn to the opportunities for English teachers in Russia, and in the Spring of 1901 he went to St Petersburg.

This stranger to Russia quickly became enchanted with the city and the cultural delights of the capital and soon he had found work teaching in one rich landed family after another, and eventually was employed to teach in the Imperial School of Jurisprudence. In time he became an active member of the British expatriate community in St Petersburg, and the Vice President of the influential guild of English teachers which at the time had many members.

In 1908 Edward VII and his wife came to meet the Russian Imperial family in Revel. This was not merely an official visit, but a family visit – the Russian Empress was Edward's niece, and her children called the King, "Uncle Bertie".

It was "Uncle Bertie" that served as the catalyst that brought Charles Gibbes to court. He remarked that the Tsar's children spoke English "with an awful accent" – the daughters had adopted the Scottish accent of their then English teacher, Mr Epps. Gibbes was recommended to Alexandra Feodorovna by one of her courtiers, and despite being surprised, Gibbes was delighted to take up the position he was offered. After a few trial lessons, which were well received, he was appointed immediately. It seemed that his future was secured! The personalities of his students pleasantly shocked Gibbes – he had not expected to find simplicity and modesty behind the curtain of imperial pomp and ceremony. He later wrote, "The Grand

Duchesses were both pretty, cheerful girls with unassuming tastes and very pleasant to talk with. They were very quick and did not need to be told twice!"

It took three years for the Empress to entrust Tsarevich Alexei's education to Gibbes. It turned out to be a far from simple task. At that time, the Tsarevich was 8 years old, and had only studied English with his mother. These studies had not been particularly successful up to that point. Gibbes by this time had already come across the Tsarevich who had visited his classes occasionally. Gibbes wrote, "This little boy wore white trousers and a Russian kaftan embroidered in a Ukrainian style in blue and silver. At 11 o'clock he would stumble into the classroom, take a look around and, with a very serious expression on his face, hold out his hand. For the whole duration of the class we did not say a single word to one another. I assume he understood how hard it was – I spoke no Russian, and he was the only child in the family who had not had an English nurse. In those circumstances silence was the most honourable solution."

Gibbes knew at once that his lessons with the heir to the throne were not going to be easy. His personality had been formed by the unusual attention occasioned by his position in the Imperial family and his serious illness.

In general the Romanov family favoured strict discipline. By nature, the Emperor was a modest, humble man, and the Empress was very controlled, allowing neither herself nor her children any luxury. This adoption of a quintessentially English style was pleasing to Gibbes. The Tsarevich, however was an entirely different matter, and not because he was the heir to the imperial throne. Alexei's illness – haemophilia – made any careless movement potentially fatal. Although we now know much more about this disease, then it was not a matter for open discussion. However his childish behaviour was overlooked primarily due to his illness, and brought about the Englishman's disapproval,



born of his puritanical upbringing. On one occasion, the Tsarevich wanted a sweet during a lesson. He rang the bell, was brought the sweet and ate it there and then. Gibbes was outraged, not by the fact that this happened during a lesson, but “what sort of pig stuffs himself without offering it around?” he wrote.

Another time he opened the windows in order to feed some birds during a lesson, and then he decided to cut first his own hair, and then his teacher’s. He used scissors to cut the wallpaper and tapestry to get at the lead balls used to weigh them down. “He wrapped some wire around one of his teeth and wanted to do the same to me – of course I resisted.” Gibbes described this incident as more of the worrying kind than the pleasant kind. All in all not a simple job in any way, especially considering the boy’s imperial rank. Nevertheless the teacher managed to unlock the heart and mind of the boy, and he began to make significant advances in his English lessons.

Gibbes spent the summer of 1914 at home in England, and it was there that he heard about the start of the war. Although Russia and England started the war as allies, his return to Russia through a large part of mainland Europe was a difficult and dangerous undertaking. Yet the lessons continued despite the depressing situation abroad. The whole Imperial family had firsthand experience of the war effort: the Empress and the Grand Duchesses worked in an infirmary every day, and Tsarevich Alexei wore a private’s uniform and took part in official duties, although he was excused any activity that might cause him any harm. He did however exert more effort on his studies. When the British Military Attaché, General Henberry-Williams, met him a year after the war started, he noted that the Tsarevich, “spoke several languages fluently,” including of course the Attaché’s native language – English.

A little later, Alexei moved to Stavka to be with his father, who had taken over as High Commander of the Russian forces. Gibbes travelled with his student. The

Emperor was keen that the heir to the throne should experience the war time atmosphere as part of his education, and Gibbes was able to witness the father’s and son’s visits to the front, inspections of the troops and visits to the field hospitals. Many people had protested against the Emperor’s decision to command the troops himself personally, but the strong and intelligent behaviour of the sovereign made such a deep impression on Gibbes, that he later wrote, “What was important, what meant something, was his goodness combined with the authority and prestige of his position.”

Rasputin, who had played such a mystic role in the life of the Imperial family, was killed towards the end of 1916. Gibbes, who did not indulge in mysticism, decided that his fate was tied to Russia in the long term and bought a school of foreign languages in St Petersburg around that time. The purchase was concluded only a few months before the Tsar’s abdication and the February Revolution. Gibbes’ business plan sank. He was forbidden access to the Imperial family, who were under guard in the Alexander Palace, and he was separated from them for six months. Gibbes continued to try to enter the business world of commerce, but his attempts were farcical, such as his attempts to sell “the Barsley smokeless kitchen stove”. He tried to reclaim the things he had left in Stavka and in the Alexander Palace, and the Elizabeth Palace and in his Petersburg flat, but in the chaos of the revolution he had no joy. His domestic difficulties were soon added to by a question of morality. The British government, which had initially agreed to take on the Imperial family, if financed by Russia, quite quickly withdrew its agreement and refused asylum to the deposed Romanovs. Gibbes was shocked by his country’s official position, while at the same time the situation in Russia was getting worse. The Imperial family’s road to Golgotha began with exile to Siberia. Gibbes, still devoted to them, set off to join them. He managed to escape the tragedies of Tobolsk



**The tutors of the heir to the Russian throne with their pupil. Gibbes is second from the right**

and Yekaterinburg, and narrowly escaping death in the Ipatiev house while working in the British Consulate in Omsk and Vladivostok, he ended up in Harbin, which at the time was the largest Russian city outside Russia. He spent seven years in China, each full of danger and intense spiritual yearning. Gibbes, although formally remaining an Anglican, frequented Russian churches, and in one of these he was asked to translate several service books into English – the Tsarevich's teacher, who was respected by the congregations because of his closeness to the Imperial family, spent quite a long time and a lot of effort on this task, which eventually served him well.

Eventually Gibbes decided to return home to England. On the way he fell ill, and spent three long months fighting for his life, not knowing if he would survive or not. However the time he spent suffering was

not wasted, and by the time of his arrival in England, Gibbes already knew that he would continue his study of theology. In 1928 he went up to Oxford to prepare for ordination at St Stephen's College, but the modernising trends of the Anglican church turned him away from taking the final step of ordination. Sydney returned to Harbin twice in 1929 and 1931, during the Sino-Japanese war and the region was quite dangerous. External difficulties once again coincided with his internal spiritual struggles and the new attempts to find a spiritual foundation for his life. He found his happy ending when he finally embraced Orthodoxy in 1934 – a quarter of a century after he first came across the Russian Church. His spiritual guide was the famous Russian missionary, Archbishop Nestor of Kamchatka.

Gibbes threw himself into his studies, and read the works of the Holy Fathers, and seeing his determination, Bishop Nestor began to prepare him for the tonsure and to enter holy

orders. On becoming a monk, Gibbes took the name Nicholas in memory of the Russian Tsar, and he soon became a deacon, and then priest. He then returned to England, but this time in order to found an Orthodox monastery. He was unsuccessful in his attempt to start the monastery, but he eventually managed to start a church in Walsingham – the ancient site of the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. In 1938 Archbishop Nestor dedicated the church, and Father Nicholas became Abbot in the same year.

Not long after that, with the blessing of the Church hierarchy, Nicholas had to move to London, where he served the community of English-speaking believers. He brought singers from Serbia, and helped them to gain citizenship – they were so gifted that they were called the Serbian Nightingales, and it was this choir that sang the canons that

Fr Nicholas translated from Church Slavonic into English. The man, who had started his journey as the teacher to the Tsar's children, started his apostolic service in Harbin which, unusual as it was at the time, turned out to be a propitious beginning. However he was once again forced to relocate. This time Fr Nicholas was forced to find a place at Oxford in order to escape the terrible air raids in London at the start of the Second World War. At the end of the war, in 1946, in the building of an old chemist's shop, Nicholas founded St Nicholas's church in the University town. Although officially it was named in honour of St Nicholas, in actual fact it was more of a memorial, dedicated to the life and acts of the last Russian Tsar. The Abbot lived on the first floor, while the ground floor was made over into a church.

It was a rather peculiar church. In the middle Fr Nicholas hung a chandelier, with pink lilies made of glass, green leaves with bunches of violets made from metal. This fixture was part of the decorations from the Ipatiev House – the last resting place of the Imperial family. Not far from the altar, the Abbot placed the Tsar's felt boots, which he had kept in his baggage and the walls were decorated with icons, which he had either found at the Ipatiev House, or which had been given him by the Imperial family. Fr Nicholas spent all the money, which he had saved up from his well paid service in Russia, on the church building, and although the congregation was about fifty souls, none of them ever contributed financially to help the abbot.

“St Nicholas's church in Oxford is an attempt to take the light of faith to the cultural and intellectual centre of the British Empire,” Gibbes wrote to Professor de Schmidt in New York. The Abbot tried to create an Orthodox cultural centre on the base of St Nicholas's church in Oxford, with the intention of having lectures, readings and educational activities, but a lack of finance meant that this was only partially possible.

Behind the church was a room which he turned into a small museum, where he



Archimandrite Nicholas Gibbes with  
Archbishop Nestor





**The interior of the church founded by Father Nicholas in Oxford**

exhibited photographs, taken during his time in Russia and relics of the Imperial family.

Fr Nicholas harboured the idea of founding an Orthodox church in Wales for a long time, believing that the Welsh, who had a long tradition of capella choral singing, would appreciate the beauty of the Russian service, but he did not have the strength to follow it through.

Not everyone in his congregation supported his decision to adopt the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate – some claiming that it was a betrayal of the principles he preached, and Fr Nicholas himself spent a long time alone struggling with the decision, but did not reverse it.

One Englishman, curious about Orthodoxy, wrote this description of the aged priest, just before his death:

“He had a cheerful face, pink cheeks, bright blue eyes and a snow white beard – it

was quite wild and thin, but came down to the middle of his chest. He spoke fluently and intelligently, showing a very alert mind. I got the impression of a simple man but practical at the same time. He was certainly no mystic. Notwithstanding his difficult life and unusual appearance, he was a true Englishman both in his views on everyday problems and in his sense of humour... He was a strong character – it was well worth listening to him, and not disputing with him.”

Fr Nicholas died in 1963, three years before his 90th birthday, and the Diocese of Sourozh had already been formed, with Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) at the head. For many years one of the icons which the Imperial family had given him had become dark from aging. A few days after his death, it appeared as new. ■

*The photographs are taken from "An Englishman in the Court of the Tsar" by Christine Benagh*

# In Memory of Patriarch Pavle of Serbia





**H**is Holiness Patriarch Pavle, who passed away this year, was a prominent figure in the Orthodox world. His exceptional modesty, integrity, and ascetic way of life earned him respect not only in Serbia and the former Yugoslavia, which comes within the canonical territory of the Serbian Orthodox Church, but also far beyond its borders.

His orphaned childhood, the privations of the war years and the serious illness he suffered as a young man inevitably left their mark on the personality of the future Patriarch, but they did not make him withdrawn and sombre – they simply gave the final shape to those characteristics which led him to the monastic life. Pavle did not alter the way of life which he chose on leaving the monastery when he became Patriarch. He could be seen on the streets of Belgrade alone, unaccompanied by lay brothers or guards, hurrying about his business. He continued to eat modestly and he never allowed fresh dishes to be prepared when there was still food left from a previous meal. He did not seek to hold on to power, and offered to retire from his post as Patriarch on health grounds, but each time the Council of Bishops persuaded him to stay on. Elected as Patriarch at the age of 76 he visited every continent and every diocese of the Serbian Church. In his 91st year he flew to Australia for two weeks. He also visited most of the National Orthodox Churches as well as many countries in Europe and other parts of the world.

Unfortunately holiness is not in great demand these days. Although he was very



**Patriarch Pavle on the streets of Belgrade**

active socially and responded vigorously to the difficult events of recent decades which led to the break-up of Yugoslavia and to war, he failed to receive an adequate response or support from the authorities, who conducted their policies without a thought for the Church, although they constantly stressed their support. His funeral was attended by all Serbia's leaders, a three-day period of mourning was declared in the country, and many people came to bid him farewell in the Cathedral Church of St Michael the Archangel in Belgrade. This was not recorded in photographs or on film, in accordance with his will. Even in death he remained an ascetic.

**MD**



*Robert F. Taft, S.J.*

## History of the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

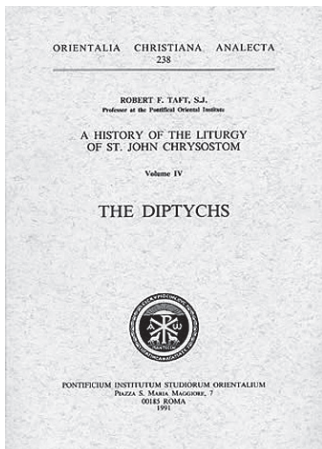
**Vol 2** The Great Entrance – the Transfer of the Gifts  
and other Preanaphoral Rites  
(2004 – 4th edition), 490 pages

**Vol 4** The Diptychs (1991), 214 pages

**Vol 5** The Precommunion Rites (2000), 573 pages

**Vol 6** The Communion, Thanksgiving and Concluding  
Rites (2008), 857 pages

**All published in the *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*  
series of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome.**



Father Robert Taft is one of the most respected scholars in the field of Eastern Christian liturgical studies writing today and is the author of an astonishing number of articles and monographs, many of which relate to our Orthodox liturgical services. With the appearance of the sixth volume of his

exhaustive history of the principal Orthodox Liturgy, it is probably time for some kind of preliminary assessment to be made. Volume six is the latest to appear but volumes one and three, that is, those which will treat the beginning of the Liturgy, the Scriptural Readings and the Holy Anaphora itself, are still awaited.

When the volume dealing with the Great Entrance first appeared, in 1975, it prompted the famous Russian émigré theologian Alexander Schmemmann to remark, parodying Churchill, that never had so much been written on so little for so few. His implied criticism is now surely compounded by the still growing size of the undertaking. The 857 pages of volume six, for example, deal just with that part of the Liturgy from the Communion of the clergy to the final dismissal prayer.

There is also a problem of availability. A growing number of book buyers rely on Internet suppliers but in the case of these volumes, Amazon either forlornly states that they are “not available at present” or doesn’t mention them at all. When one or other volume does appear as a second-hand item, it is at a wholly exorbitant price.

Despite the daunting size of the books and their difficulty of purchase (best done directly with the Oriental Institute) one cannot just smile at Father Alexander’s witticism and ignore Taft’s achievement. Detail is indeed piled up and sometimes one reads with a kind of fascinated horror, and yet the author’s style is so lively and engaging that one does read on, even when, for example, he manages to take sixty pages just to deal with the use of hot water (the *zeon*) in the Orthodox Communion ritual.

These volumes are not merely a line-by-line commentary on the Liturgy. Along the way Taft discusses matters of historical importance and current debate. Liturgical “units” – as the author calls them – are examined theologically and sociologically, giving us fascinating glimpses of Orthodox Christian life in late antiquity and in the Byzantine period and later. This, I think, is Taft’s greatest achievement – he calls it “history from the bottom up”.

Some of the many topics discussed in this work include the meaning of Holy Communion “for the remission of sins” and how this relates to the Mystery of Repentance and, on a different level, the question of Consecration “by contact” in the Presanctified Liturgy and that of the commemorative particles placed on the discos and their relationship to the “Lamb”. Different interpretations of the latter issues have occasionally led in the past to difficulties when Greek and Russian clergy served together and it is illuminating to read Taft’s sensible conclusions.

Sometimes there is a lack of balance in the relative importance of topics, as when nearly as many pages are taken to deal with the use of hot water (mentioned above) – not to mention forty pages on Communion spoons, including an archaeological excursus – as to discuss such

significant questions as the frequency of serving the Liturgy over the centuries or the frequency of monastic and lay reception of Communion in early Christian and Byzantine times.

Sometimes also, the author's own enthusiasms get in the way of a balanced presentation. This is particularly irritating when he deals, at great length of course, with the use of the spoon to give Communion. He denies that such a practice involves "drinking" – and thus maintains that it goes against Our Saviour's express command at His Supper. Here it is difficult to escape the conclusion that what he really implies is something to the effect that "yes, we Catholics are wrong to give Communion in one kind but the Orthodox practice of using the spoon is just as bad!"

This is unacceptable. It is simply playing with words to make a distinction between drinking from a cup directly or soaking food and liquid together and then to say that only the first means that one "drinks". I have no desire to overemphasise the fact that Robert Taft is not only a Jesuit but also a Uniate priest but the question is unavoidable for the following reasons –

1. His unexplained yet quite cutting anti-Orthodox observations. They are infrequent but very noticeable, and unnecessary in what is essentially a work of liturgical history.
2. His curious uniate habit of sometimes speaking as an ordinary Catholic and sometimes as though he is Orthodox (though of the kind who just happens to be in communion with Rome).
3. His strange liturgical vocabulary – quite unfamiliar to any Anglophone Orthodox – part Greek, part Latin, part perhaps his own ("orate fratres prayer" et al.).
4. Throughout the book, the assumption that if the West has been unfaithful to the best traditions of Christian liturgy, the "East" has been so too.

Finally, one must comment on Taft's curious attitude to the reform of the Liturgy. Like all Catholics since the Second Vatican Council, he takes it as given that such reform must and should take place. As yet however the various

uniat bodies have been a little nervous about following their Latin brethren too closely. Taft seems to share this caution at times, maintaining that he is a liturgical "informer not reformer". However, in his Great Entrance volume, in the conclusions of some of the other volumes and in some of his other published writings, he gives detailed suggestions of how the reform of various parts of the Liturgy should proceed. In more recent works he appears to distance himself from the results of some of his suggestions – seemingly after witnessing what some American uniate priests have got up to.

In this connection, again following Vatican II, he is strongly critical of "repetition" in the Liturgy and other Orthodox services. In the Great Entrance volume, he even finds the use of the Symbol of Faith unfortunate, as the summary of Christian faith contained in it is going to be proclaimed fully in the Holy Anaphora anyway. Then of course there are all those litanies...

It is truly astonishing that it has apparently escaped the notice of a person of such great erudition, that repetition is precisely a defining characteristic of what he calls the "Byzantine Rite". Metropolitan Kallistos [Ware] has expressed this so vividly that I cannot refrain from quoting him:

*Those unfamiliar with Orthodox worship may at first be surprised at the large amount of repetition that occurs in the services... This constant reiteration, so far from indicating poverty of thought or a liturgical garrulousness, is designed to serve a definite purpose. Orthodoxy makes little or no use of that form of spiritual recollection known in the west as "meditation", when a period of time is set aside each day for systematic thought upon some chosen theme. Its place is taken in the Orthodox Church by corporate liturgical worship. As an Orthodox Christian stands in church, hour by hour, he hears the same necessary and saving truths continually underlined now in one way and now in another. In this fashion the theological significance of the different mysteries of the faith is deeply and indelibly impressed upon*

*his mind, becoming almost second nature.*  
[Introduction to *THE FESTAL MENAION*  
pp 65–66]

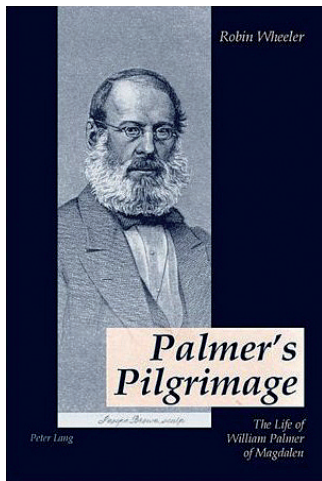
In conclusion, what can one usefully say about this huge yet still incomplete history?

First, it is clearly indispensable to anyone who is at all interested in the history of the development of our beloved Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom over the ages. Second, it desperately needs a manageable abridged edition which concentrates on the really significant questions and which is produced by an accessible publisher.

*Robin Wheeler*

## Palmer's Pilgrimage: the Life of William Palmer of Magdalen

Bern: Peter Lang, 2006, 427 pages



This is a very important book for anyone involved with or merely interested in relations between Orthodox and non-Orthodox today. On the surface it deals with the activities and writings of one man – a nearly forgotten figure of the Anglican Oxford Movement of the 19th century – but it is actually concerned with

many of the problems which are still with us and which also affect inter-Orthodox relations.

The writer is an Orthodox scholar who has made full use not only of Palmer's papers and material in Lambeth Palace and Magdalen College Oxford but also of the archives of the Holy Synod in St Petersburg. The book has been very thoroughly researched.

William Palmer (1811–1879) was a High Church theologian and deacon of the Church of

England who held rigidly to a “branch theory” which taught that while Lutherans, Calvinists, etc. were heretics and outside the “Catholic Church”, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Anglicans formed one Body. The theological differences between the three were relatively minor and each formed the Catholic Church in its respective region. Thus, in France or Italy the Roman Church was the Catholic Church but not in England (where the Anglicans held this role). Of course in Russia and the Turkish Empire the Orthodox was the local Catholic Church.

Palmer made two visits to Russia to establish contact with the Russian Church and to test his theory by being recognised as a fellow Catholic and admitted to Holy Communion. He failed utterly in the latter of course, but did form close and fruitful ties with the great Metropolitan St Philaret of Moscow, Alexis Khomiakoff, the famous lay theologian, and Andrei Mouravieff, Unter-Prokuror of the Holy Synod and noted Church historian. They continued to be his friends and correspondents throughout his life.

As a result of his discussions in Russia, and the utter rejection of his anti-protestant ecclesiology by many Anglicans, Palmer moved more and more towards a “two-branch” theory (though he would not have used such an expression) embracing Rome and Orthodoxy but no longer Anglicanism. He was faced with a stark choice – all his theological sympathies were with the East yet he could not face the cultural obstacles involved in becoming Orthodox. Despite the pleas of Khomiakoff he began to turn his face to Roman Catholicism where so many of his Oxford friends had found peace. The final crisis came when he found that the Greek Church (of those days) insisted on baptising all converts although the Russians would have received him by Chrismation only. This seemed to Palmer an intolerable and major inconsistency making Orthodox claims to a unity of faith, nonsensical. This is anyway what he claimed was his conclusion.

In 1855 he formally became a Roman Catholic and spent the rest of his life in Rome. He openly admitted that he still believed all that



the Orthodox East taught and that he did not accept (in his “own private judgment”) official Roman teaching “not only on certain doctrines but even respecting the Definition of the Church on which they depend”. A truly astonishing statement confirmed by the fact that Palmer never subsequently wrote any apologetic works in favour of Roman teachings or even bothered to comment on the definition of Papal Infallibility in 1870, which so troubled the Roman Catholic intelligentsia of the time. He did however produce a massive (and still very useful) work on one his great heroes, Patriarch Nikon of Moscow.

Wheeler’s book deals with many other aspects of Palmer’s life, including his fascinating correspondence with Khomiakoff, on the nature of the Church. For this reason alone it deserves to be read but there are other reasons, which still present Orthodox Christians with questions that await answers.

Firstly, do we Orthodox still give the impression that we hold some kind of “branch-theory” of the Church (either the two or the three-twig variety)? Have we yet settled on a commonly agreed way of receiving converts from different Western bodies into the Church? In a wider sense, do we really appreciate the profound nature of the work that Khomiakoff and Metropolitan Philaret put into developing a coherent theology of ecumenical relations, or do we think we now know better and can simply start again to work something out?

Finally, have we solved all the problems involved in the cultural leap that someone from a Western Christian background must make before he or she can become truly a member of the Orthodox Church? And this is not all the fault of the Orthodox of course. The late Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, on his seventy-fifth birthday, made the following profound statement in an interview:

*Orthodoxy, encountering heterodoxy in Britain, comes up not so much against culture in the universal sense as against national prejudices. For instance, a person who wants to embrace Orthodoxy, is not told in the Church*

*where he or she was baptised: “Why should you become Orthodox: isn’t our Church rich enough spiritually?” but is almost always told: “Are you really going to join this Church of foreigners? How can you remain British, becoming Russian?”... people often do not realise that a person who embraces Orthodoxy does not become Russian but is only initiated in the Orthodox spiritual tradition and these are absolutely different things.*

*Kenneth W. Stevenson*

## The Lord’s Prayer – a Text in Tradition

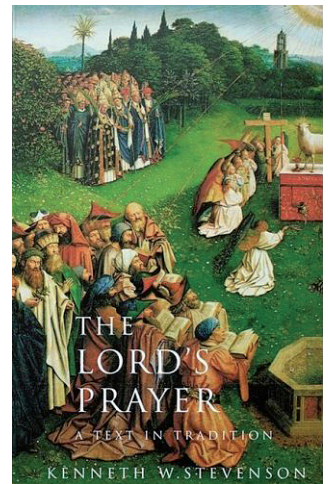
London: SCM Press, 2004

The author of this book is the Anglican Bishop of Portsmouth and he has given us a profound and original work indeed, much more so than his modest title would first suggest.

This is not the usual spiritual journey through the Our Father, neither is it dry academic work full of references to lost Aramaic sources.

What it is, is a very full history of how Our Saviour’s own Prayer has been interpreted and used in the Church from the time of the Evangelical accounts of Saints Matthew and Luke down through the ages to our own century.

Of particular interest to the Orthodox reader are the first five chapters, which deal with the New Testament; the commentaries and interpretations of the Fathers of the Church, both Eastern and Western; the early Liturgical texts and the “later” Orthodox saints and writers down to Saint Symeon of Thessalonica (died 1429).



It is very interesting that the interpretations of the Lord's Prayer in the later medieval West and by the famous Protestant Reformers, which are discussed in subsequent chapters of this book, add surprisingly little which is original to what our Church Fathers say about each of the phrases of the Prayer. It is as though the later West found that everything important had already been explained. Of more interest are the sections dealing with more recent times and with modern attempts to produce a satisfactory new English translation. This led to various radical experiments after 1960 but seems to have finally resulted in a version remarkably like the traditional Tudor one (even down to the use of the word "hallowed"!).

Orthodox readers will also be pleased to find that Bishop Stevenson, unlike most Western Christian writers, has not ignored the contribution of modern Russian theologians and in fact regards Father Alexander Schmemmann's as one of the most helpful and creative works on the subject ("Our Father", New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002). The Bishop is not quite correct in regarding Father Alexander as typically Russian in his use of examples from the Russian classics. Their use is rather because the book is based on broadcasts he made to Russia in the Soviet period in which he was trying to reach listeners who would be more familiar with Russian literature than with the Christian Scriptures. By the way, Father Alexander's

book cannot be recommended too highly to the contemporary Orthodox reader, and is fortunately still readily available.

The reviewer found much that was helpful in the Bishop's book and an example of this, and of his detailed methodology, can be seen in his treatment of the phrase "Give us this day our Daily Bread". He discusses how different Church Fathers understood these words and especially the unusual Greek term "epiousios" which is commonly translated as "Daily". The tradition of regarding this as referring to "necessary" bread in the sense of that which we need to sustain our earthly life is a very ancient one. Equally ancient though, is the Eucharistic interpretation which refers the words to the Bread of Life, our Heavenly Food and it is this view which probably has most support from the Fathers and ancient Liturgical commentators. Saint Maximus the Confessor calls it "the Bread of Life, not earthly needs" though Saint Germanus of Constantinople (died 733) says we pray here for the food that feeds the soul as well as the body, thus seeming to combine both interpretations.

We constantly repeat the Lord's Prayer; in our private prayers, at Vespers, the Hours and all the other Services and most solemnly and slowly in our Orthodox Liturgy just before Holy Communion. This book is filled not only with information but with Patristic thoughts which will help us to benefit more when we use this prayer of prayers. I strongly recommend it to Orthodox readers. ■

# THE PARISH OF ST NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER (Oxford)

## Building Appeal

**T**he Parish of St Nicholas the Wonderworker (the Diocese of Sourozh) is a Russian Orthodox community in Oxford. The parish consists of Orthodox people from a variety of nationalities and backgrounds and maintains a full cycle of Divine Services. Since its foundation, our parish has been worshipping in rented accommodation.

We now have the opportunity to purchase a highly suitable church building, close to the city centre. This spiritual home will allow our parish to more fully develop its mission within the local community.

The building we hope to purchase, originally dedicated to St Nicholas, has been closed for worship for nearly forty years and we have been granted permission to restore it to its original use.

The purchase and renovation will cost in the region of £500,000. Sections of the roof and walls will need to be restored or rebuilt, the body of the church re-wired and redecorated with new lighting and central heating. Inside, there will be social space and a gallery for the choir and Sunday School. We intend to make our church wheelchair-accessible, and provide a disabled toilet and baby-changing facilities.

Without the generosity of members, friends and benefactors we will not be able to purchase and renovate the St Nicholas church building. We ask you to consider giving generously, whether by a one-off contribution or by setting up regular giving, via a Banker's Standing Order. May God bless your generosity!

**Online:** You can make a donation online via our website:  
<http://appeal.stnicholas-oxford.org>

**By cheque:** Cheques may be made payable to 'St Nicholas Orthodox Parish (Building Appeal)' and posted to 9 Hengrove Close, Oxford, OX3 9LN

**By standing order:** Forms available from the website or appeal secretary

**By bank transfer:** St Nicholas Orthodox Parish (Building Appeal)  
Abbey Business Banking Centre, 301 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5NB  
Account no.: 25105294  
Sort code: 09-01-27

Our parish is a registered charity (no. 1118783).

The purpose of our fundraising appeal is to buy a new building for the Parish of St Nicholas the Wonderworker. If for any reason we are unable to buy this particular building, or there are surplus funds left over following the purchase and renovation work, we will use the money to purchase an alternative building or further the work of the parish.



# The Russian Music Company presents **Sourozh Musical Evenings** in London *2010*

## **16 January**

**Cathedral of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God and Holy Royal Martyrs (57 Harvard Road, London W4 4ED)**

*Welcome Christmas.* Performed by the children of the Sunday School of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Dormition and All Saints (Christmas songs and carols from around the world, scenes from the Nativity story)  
*Admission free*

## **5 March**

**Pushkin House (5A Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2TA)**

*Young musicians.* Anastasia Maksyuta, piano (Moscow), Sergei Tugarinov, violin (London). *For ticket information please visit the Pushkin House website* (<http://www.pushkinhouse.org>)

## **25 April**

**The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Dormition and All Saints (67 Ennismore Gardens, London SW7 1NH)**

*Jubilee concert: Tchaikovsky, Trubachev.* The Oktoich Chamber Choir (Amsterdam), directed by Aliona Ovsianikova  
*Admission free*

## **27 May**

**St. Peter's Church (Vere Street, London W1)**

*An evening of music by Konstantin Boyarsky*

The programme includes works for piano, alto and male choir, and vocal works  
*For information please call: 07817 684 517*

## **6 June**

**The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Dormition and All Saints (67 Ennismore Gardens, London SW7 1NH)**

*A. S. Pushkin. An evening with Boris Burlyaev (London)*  
*Admission free*

## **20 June**

**The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Dormition and All Saints (67 Ennismore Gardens, London SW7 1NH)**

*A. S. Pushkin. Poetry and prose.* Excerpts from his one-man show performed by Valery Ivchenko (from the Bolshoy Drama Theatre, St Petersburg)  
*Admission free*

**More information can be found on the website of the The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Dormition and All Saints: [www.sourozh.org](http://www.sourozh.org) (Events)**  
**Email: [khorovik@mail.ru](mailto:khorovik@mail.ru)**