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Author(s): Vasily V. Zenkovsky

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The Spirit of Russian Orthodoxy

By Vasily V. Zenkovsky

RUSSIAN Orthodoxy and Eastern Christianity in general are characterized by two particular features: strict devotion to Church tradition and the use of the national language in the liturgy—a fact which, from the earliest times, permitted each people to develop its own form of Orthodoxy. However, since Orthodoxy considers itself a universal teaching, its theological essence remains the same and unchanged in each country. Dogmas, canonical structure, faithfulness to fundamental Christian traditions, and the recognition of the authority of the Church are the fundamental precepts of Orthodoxy in all Eastern Christian lands, and adherence to these precepts has continued unchanged over the centuries. But the fact that, throughout its history, Orthodoxy has been opposed to the language uniformity found in Roman Catholicism, has permitted each Orthodox country to develop unique features. The use of native tongues in the liturgy, sermons, holy books, and education brought out these national features, which history in turn deepened and strengthened. It is not surprising, then, to find certain traits in Russian Orthodoxy which cannot be found in any other Orthodox countries.

In order to understand the present situation of Russian Christianity and its characteristics, one should bear in mind that Christianity appeared in Russia only in the tenth century. It encountered at first strong opposition from paganism, but by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a specifically Russian style of Church life had taken shape, characterized mainly by the rigorous enforcement of fasting, meek submission to God's

will, and humility before all that is difficult and inaccessible in life. Although not yet fully developed and perhaps primitive, an integral religious vision of the world was being formed. This general attitude was given expression in the *Domostroy*, a sixteenth-century book concerned with commendable moral and religious attitudes and behavior. It was felt that this embodiment of religious life would be definitive and that Russian life would remain fixed and unaltered forever.

A series of historical events, however, caused substantial alterations in the Russian world view. The fall of Byzantium in 1453 was one of the first of these momentous events, and it set in motion a new ideological and ecclesiastical world-view. Toward the beginning of the sixteenth century, a north Russian monk, Philatheus, came out with the "third Rome" theory. This theory arose from the Russians' distrust of Roman Catholicism which Byzantium had sown in the Russian mind since the earliest time of the conversion. Russia tended to regard the Church of Rome as a fallen one. According to the "third Rome" theory then, the first (pagan) Rome had succumbed. The second Rome (Christian) was considered to be Constantinople, but now it too had fallen, a fact which many Russians interpreted as God's punishment for its association with the Roman Church at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1439. Now Moscow had become the only vessel of the true faith. It was the "third Rome," and there would never be a fourth.

Some hundred and fifty years later, in the middle of the seventeenth century, a new theory was developed by powerful authoritarian Patriarch Nikon—that of the Church's domination over the state and, consequently, over the course of history. This theory approached the teachings of medieval Western theocracy, and Nikon indirectly borrowed the core of his teachings from the writings of Pope Innocent III. Since this typically Roman idea of Church supremacy had no real foundation in Russian thought and culture, Nikon was easily defeated by the

Tsar and deposed. Despite the adherence of some contemporary bishops to this proud, theocratic dream, it had no subsequent following either among the clergy or among the laity.

The middle of the seventeenth century witnessed not only conflict between the Patriarch and the Tsar over the spiritual supremacy of Church and state, but also the Russian Church's deepest and most dangerous problem—the schism, or, as it is called in Russian, the *raskol*. Its external causes were Nikon's drastic innovations in the Church service and the prayer book. Internally, however, the schism resulted from several conflicting spiritual trends, and it shattered forever the dreams of ecclesiastical domination over society which had been ripening among the clergy. Furthermore, the new turn in Russian history in the second half of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—particularly under Peter the Great, who abolished the patriarchate and introduced a Synod entirely controlled by the Emperor—resulted in the growth of eschatological teachings which had till then remained uncultivated in Russian thought.

The submission of Church to state was looked upon by many Orthodox Russian believers as an apostasy. Those who accepted neither the innovations of Nikon nor the reforms of Peter the Great became passionately devoted to the "old faith," that is, to the traditional forms of service and prayer and to the idea of the particular mission of Russian Christianity. Among these people, who came to be known as "Old Believers," a psychology of martyrdom arose as a means of rejecting secular interference in religious matters. Thousands of these Old Believers preferred to burn themselves rather than submit to the state, which they now considered possessed by the Antichrist. The Church historian, A. Kartashov, has rightly compared the Old Believers' devotion to their faith with that of ancient Israel as seen in the indictments of their prophets.

Many of the most religious and devout members of the Church were persecuted for their unwavering faith in the old

beliefs. The schism split the mass of the faithful and put an end to the style of Church life which had prevailed up to this time. Likewise, it brought out a new feature of Orthodoxy in general, but more specifically of Russian Orthodoxy: Church traditionalism, or the adherence to the teachings of the early Church fathers, firm support of all values that had woven the fabric of Church life from its very beginnings, and rejection of any ecclesiastical innovations. As a matter of fact, the schism linked traditionalism with the external forms of Church life. Orthodox traditionalism as such, then, hardly justifies Harnack's indictment of Orthodoxy as being a "petrified Church." To abide by the past, to turn constantly towards the Holy Church fathers, did not in any way mean that Orthodoxy was unreceptive to contemporary trends. On the contrary, being firmly based on an authentic tradition, it remained open to wide activities in a modern society.

The fact remains that while the schism deeply perturbed the Russian Church conscience, it was enormously beneficial in freeing it from theocratic dreams. It averted the threat of Church secularization, and it clearly showed that faithfulness to Christ's truths rules out the thought of political predominance by the Church, as happened in the theocracy of Medieval Europe. From this period on, the theocratic idea was closely linked to the notion of God's kingdom and was no longer bridled with the temptation of being an actual theocratic power. The theocratic idea took on an inner spiritual meaning. The ways of the Church were now understood as the internal transfiguration of man and his life. This rejection of theocratic dreams was, then, of tremendous significance for the further evolution of Russian Christianity.

The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed the beginning of a revival, a renewal of spiritual life which occurred primarily in the monasteries. This was contemporaneous with an external lack of freedom in the Church. In fact, the paradox

of Russian Church life of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was that during this synodal period the Church externally was seized by a sort of "paralysis," to use Dostoevsky's expression, whereas internally it was growing and flourishing. From the outside it appeared to degenerate and fade away, losing its grip over Russian life, whereas within the fire of internal renewal, still often imperceptible to an alien observer, was burning brighter and brighter. I should add that the Church's earlier tendency to control the Russian mind had now lost much of its influence and power.

Among the eighteenth-century educated gentry there could be observed a definite spiritual vacuum. These men turned away from a weakened ecclesiastical conception and began searching for a new ideology, a new foundation of life. Their minds were captivated by French, German, and English influences. Thus Church life became concentrated in the monasteries, while the upper classes looked elsewhere for meaning in life, and there seemed to be no prospect for a Renaissance of Orthodoxy. The Church no longer laid down the law to secular society, but rather endeavored to discover and recognize the spiritual values of life in this world. This the Church did with the purpose of transfiguring the world, of finding in the very core of this world the bases of its enlightenment and metamorphosis. This was a new and unusual theme containing the seeds of the basic tradition which Russian thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries inherited from the early Church. This renewal in the Church went unnoticed by the major part of the intelligentsia as well as the common people. However, in both of these sectors real believers grew more aware of the treasures of their religion. They started to exert themselves to perceive clearly what Orthodoxy expected of them.

Let us consider now some manifestations of this revival in the Russian Church, and particularly of changes which took place at the intellectual level. We cannot go into details and

shall merely say a few words about three men whose ideas have remained the mainstays of the Russian Church intelligentsia. These three men were Khomiakov, Kireevsky and Gogol. These three laid the foundation for what is called "Russian Orthodox culture" and brought considerable groups of Russian society back to the Church. This trend is still in progress. It represented, and still represents, the driving force in Russian spiritual life, a force which reveals the wealth of Orthodoxy and paves the way toward its further successes.

A. S. Khomiakov (1804-1860) was raised in a religious atmosphere and had an education which was at once vast and versatile. He was responsible for the rise of the teaching of Slavophilism, a school of thought which was diametrically opposed to the school of Westernizers. Slavophilism sought a basis for life in what was original in Russian culture. Its central idea was the tenet of *sobornost* (from *sobor*, meaning a council or congregation of believers.) For Khomiakov, the Church is not a "society of the faithful," not an organization, but a unity in grace in the body of Christ. For, according to Khomiakov, only in the Church and with the Church can a person achieve his individuality. As a body endowed with grace the Church breathes freedom and without this freedom one cannot live. Hence, Khomiakov acutely criticized Catholicism, which puts foremost the formal principle of unity: Catholicism hinders freedom, for its whole activity is concentrated in the clergy; laymen are thus kept from actively participating in the church's life under Roman Catholicism. Moreover, the Russian Church is a "council body," a *sobornoe telo*. This notion of *sobornost* is the main property of the Church in Khomiakov's thought. Russian philosophy took up this notion and gave it a remarkable development.

The term *sobornost*, unknown in other Orthodox countries, and which derives from a philological mistake by translators of the ecclesiastical books, was actually a stroke of genius. In the

Russian translation the Greek work *katholiki* used in the Nicean symbol of faith became the word *sobornost*. Rome did not attempt to translate this word into Latin but merely latinized it to *ecclesia catholica*. The translation of the Credo into Slavonic became: "I believe in the One, the Holy, the *sobornaya*, and Apostolic Church," and to some extent corresponds to the uncertain meaning of the Greek *katholon*. The Russian Church thus relates the notion of catholicity, wholeness or concerning the whole, to that of a council or congregation. *Sobornost* was substantially a *new* notion and for the Russian conscience it spelled the idea of the Church's *unity in grace*, with the emphasis on the grace. In other words, the congregation is united in the Church through the very essence of the Church, where all the faithful are one in Christ, and not merely united by formal, outer bonds. The notion of *sobornost* took deep roots in Russian thought. Prince Serge Trubetskoi's theory of *sobornaya*, or the congregational nature of man's conscience, is its most remarkable derivation. According to Trubetskoi, our conscience is not personal because it contains many elements which are not *from us* but only *in us*. It is also not impersonal because it is a part of the personality. Therefore, the conscience is *supra-personal, it binds us with all men*. The logical operations of the mind and the faculty of moral judgments are common to all men. Thus all men, all humanity, are a spiritual unity. Man's personality is the expression of his originality, and yet each element of personality is itself not individual because each man has much in common with his fellow-man. Such is the *sobornaya* theory of man's conscience as put forth by Serge Trubetskoi.

The idea of the "congregational nature" of human consciousness explains the natural unity of humanity, though not necessarily unity in grace. The Church, with its gift of grace, completes and fulfills all that is natural to man. The Holy Spirit resides in the Church and a genuine ecclesiastical activity cor-

responds always to the formulation of the First Council of Jerusalem: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," (Acts: XV, 28). This is the idea of *synergism*, of the realization that only with God and in the Church does the truth appear to us.

The idea of *sobornost* precludes that the truth is revealed in the Church which is a congregational unity in grace. In its "sacrament," to use Khomiakov's own expression, and in its unity of grace, freedom is spiritually maintained. These basic notions, which have been accepted by the Russian theological mind, opposed Western individualism which, in the minds of Khomiakov and his followers, basically ignored the *natural* unity of humanity and unity *in grace* within the Church.

Khomiakov's friend and contemporary, Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1856), fully agreed with the former's teachings but more fully perceived the truth in Western culture. He endeavored to relate this truth to Orthodoxy and thus sought new bases for the Orthodox philosophy. He advanced the idea of gathering the forces of the spirit around the inner core where God's image acts on man.

During Kireevsky's time there were in Russia many Westernizers, or believers in Western culture and its applicability to Russia. With this belief in Western culture came also the Western belief in man's individualism. Kireevsky founded, in agreement with the spirit of Orthodoxy, a new doctrine of man, which linked each man as a personality or individual to Orthodoxy and its sacred tradition. This new teaching had manifold repercussions on Russian thought, which can be seen in the works of Nesselov, Mikhailovsky, and Lopatin. Nesselov, a professor at the Kazan Theological Academy, developed this teaching in his work *The Doctrine of Man*. Mikhailovsky and Lopatin both made analyses of man's spirit within the framework of Kireevsky's theories. In the thought of Kireevsky and his followers, freedom resides in the individual's search for unity in life through the body and grace of the Church.

Nikolai Gogol, though no theologian, made a real contribution to Russian religious thought. Gogol was a writer of genius who hoped his writings would show the evils of society and bring about a moral reform which would abolish these evils. As Dickens wrote of London, Gogol wrote about the evils and oppressions of St. Petersburg life and how people were crushed by the grueling demands of making a living in a metropolis. Unlike Dickens, however, who looked to social reform to abolish this harsh way of life, Gogol looked to moral reform which would make Russia into a truly Christian nation. Still, Gogol's works such as "The Overcoat" and *Dead Souls*, instead of bringing about this moral reform, only made the liberals clamor the more for social reforms which Gogol didn't deem necessary or even desirable. As a result Gogol came to look upon his works as evil since they didn't fulfill their objectives. In 1846 he published his last work, *Selected Passages from Correspondence with my Friends*, a collection of essays in letter form in which he discussed politics, religion, and literature. This book produced a great outcry among the Russian intelligentsia, many of whom until then had been close friends of Gogol. He was called a member of the black reaction by many and the famous Russian critic Belinsky called him an "apostle of ignorance and defender of obscurantism." Thus the intelligentsia, who were accustomed to viewing Gogol as an acute critic of society, could not accept his spiritual solution for the problem. Gogol died at the age of 43 from self-imposed starvation, unable to reconcile his former writings and former associations among the intelligentsia with his ideas on the necessity for spiritual reform. Gogol's main contribution to Russian religious thought was his preaching of the urgency to reform and remake Russian society into a truly Christian one through man's inner revelation and not through simple external religiosity.

L. Tolstoy's spiritual crisis may be viewed as a consequence of the Gogolian influence. Tolstoy was aware of his spiritual

dependence on Gogol and often expressed a desire to put back in print Gogol's last work, mentioned above. Tolstoy, similarly to Gogol, believed in the idea of reconstructing culture on religious foundations. In his book, *Confession*, Tolstoy describes his own religious crisis and return to the faith. However, Tolstoy soon broke completely with the Church because he could not accept the dogmas of Orthodoxy. Unlike Gogol, he could break with the Church and still find meaning in life by concentrating exclusively on the moral teachings of Christ. Tolstoy also rejected personal immortality. "Resist ye not evil" became the highest principle of his teaching. The influence of Tolstoy's teachings did not remain limited to Russia, but many of his ideas found considerable repercussions beyond the boundaries of Russia. For Tolstoy religion is essentially moral and, as such, love of God is the primary and only virtue. Love for one's fellowman is only a consequence of love for God.

Dostoevsky was an acute critic of Western European culture and of those who would impose it on Russia. The west, in his view, with its individualistic separation of the spirit, is a "dear cemetery," as Ivan Karamazov put it. This disappointment in Western culture lay the stress on spiritual principles, which are so dear to Russian Orthodoxy. Dostoevsky, in his *Notes from the Underground*, rejects and sharply criticizes the individualistic, utilitarian ethics of the West. He laid a foundation for what might be called Christian personalism, or the idea of freedom as the basis of personality. This freedom doesn't divide or separate men from each other but, on the contrary, unites them in the Church and Christ. Like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky put the emphasis on morality, on doing what is right for the common good. Yet, as mentioned above, Tolstoy believed that the highest morality was the love of God and not human ethics. This was not the case with Dostoevsky. He believed that the *summum bonum* was charity, love, and pity for fellow human beings and that through these God is revealed to man. Tolstoy and Dos-

toevsky are then at opposite poles in their theological thought.

Like Gogol, Dostoevsky may be called a prophet of Orthodox culture. As a Slavophile, he rejected Western culture for its spiritual decadence and tried to find special meaning in Russian life through the Church. Thus Dostoevsky may be considered responsible for the change of attitude of Russian thinkers toward the West. Most of the contemporary Russian Orthodox writers treat the cultural disparity between Russia and Western Europe primarily in terms of their different spiritual background and attempt to develop an authentic Orthodox understanding of life and historical evolution.

Let us turn now from the study of the ideological trends among the Russian intelligentsia to the situation and changes in the religious life of the Russian people. As explained above, the schism tragically divided the Church and its people. The Church, itself, lost its ambition for political as well as ecclesiastical supremacy. These ambitions had been strong temptations to the clergy, but after the schism they were completely given up and forgotten. New ways had to be found for the Church to influence people and society.

A manifestation of this search for new ways may be found in *A Spiritual Thesaurus Collected from the World*, a book by St. Tikhon Zadonsky, which appeared in the late eighteenth century. This work presents a new relationship between the Church and life and began a new trend in enlightened Orthodoxy. In this relationship Russian Orthodoxy rejoices about the world, seeks to find its spiritual truths, but doesn't subject itself to the world; instead, it awaits the world's free spiritual transfiguration. This dedication to the truth, to the acceptance of the world and "separation of the wheat from the chaff," the truth from the untruth, is the very heart of the contemporary Russian Orthodox mind. Perhaps there is no better expression of this dedication than the Russian Easter services, when the truths about man and the world are discovered anew. The basic truth of

Easter is Christ's victory. His power to transfigure that which entered the world through Him. It is interesting that in Eastern Christianity it is the idea of the resurrection that predominates Easter, whereas in Roman Catholicism and Protestantism Christ's crucifixion and sufferings seem to be of primary interest. In the West the recognition of sin has and does overshadow the awareness of God in the world and may account for this emphasis on Christ's suffering for our sins. In the Orthodox approach this is not so. Instead there is a fundamental realization that the world is saved through Christ's resurrection. In summary, the Church accepts the world and seeks to find its truth. I would call this idea the message of "luminous reception," of Christian cosmism.

Alien to Orthodoxy, therefore, are the Roman Catholic tendency to dominate society and Protestantism's tendency to adjust, and thus subject, itself to society, to earthly reality. The Russian Church lives in the awareness that it makes everything different. Freedom in Christ, however, does not coincide with natural, political, or social freedom (see the passage of Paul in his epistle to the Galatians on this problem of freedom). The Orthodox conscience, then, is motivated by its faith in the spiritual transfiguration of man. Thus the Russian view of criminals, for example, is not one of indifference or castigation, but of hope for the possibility of their moral resurrection and renovation. This process of renovation, or moral resurrection, often takes place in the heart of simple people and many times goes deeper than among the intellectuals. It often results in the genuine inner transfiguration of the man. In a short story, "A Living Relic," which is a part of the collection *The Hunter's Sketches* by Turgenev, there is described an instance of deep penetration of Christianity into the hearts of simple people. The Russian seeks God's truth rather than man's truth and accepts this truth as the measure of his life. "Many of us peasants roam the world, and seek righteousness," says the peasant Kassian in the same *Hunter's Sketches*.

Before 1917 the Russian people liked to travel from monastery to monastery searching for a pattern of life in Christ. The figure of Starets Zosima in the *Brothers Karamazov* shows how monasteries nurtured the Russian soul. The people used to come to the monasteries in search of God's truth and often found it in the words of the so-called *starets*, spiritually highly gifted and experienced monks. Many of these monasteries were remarkable for the influence they exerted on the people. Both cultured and simple, rich and poor, Russians used to go there in search of the truth. The Optina Pustyn Monastery reached one of the highest points of monastic piety. Such people as Gogol, Kireevsky, Leontiev, Dostoevsky, and many other prominent intellectuals who looked for spiritual guidance used to come to the Optina Pustyn for advice and retreat.

In the nineteenth century the Russian Church had several outstanding Churchmen. The most remarkable of them were St. Seraphim of Sarov and Father John of Kronstadt; the latter, though not as yet beatified, is revered as a saint by very many Russians. St. Seraphim of Sarov taught that only in Christ does the whole truth reside. According to him, the meaning of life is to "acquire the Holy Spirit," in other words, to transfigure one's own soul by prayer, by participating in the sacraments, and by concentrating on the truth which must bring one close to the state described in the words of St. Paul: "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Galatians: II, 20). This mystical transfiguration of man subjects his outer activity entirely to serving God internally. This spiritual life breeds yet another attitude, that of humility. Essentially this doesn't mean passivity or quietism as demonstrated in such French mystics as Fenelon or Madame Guyon but rather a recognition of one's nature and limitations before God. Humility, then, leads to the "acquisition of the Holy Spirit."

It should be mentioned here that among the Russian people there is a wide-spread practice of reciting the "Jesus prayer."

This short prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me a sinner," is usually repeated mentally only. It is repeated a great many times with the purpose of intense concentration on the idea of God and of the preclusion of all other thoughts. In this way is attained the spiritual sobriety which, according to the Orthodox view, is the foundation of spiritual life. Therefore the "Jesus prayer" aims at avoiding exaltation and never leads to such phenomena as *stigmata*, a typical climax in the Roman Catholic piety as represented by St. Francis d'Assisi and many other outstanding representatives of Catholic spirituality and mysticism.

St. Seraphim of Sarov liked to express his joy for the world and its people, and, in fact, when people came to see him, he called them "my joy." From all parts of Russia people used to flock to his cell to learn from him how to live and pray. Since his death and beatification his spiritual teachings and practices have become very popular among the Russian people.

Father John of Kronstadt also proved that in humility resides a tremendous strength for spiritual activity. It can be said that Father John imbued the Russian Church with liturgical tenseness and feelings, and he showed great spiritual concentration in his daily celebration of the liturgy. According to Father John, the power of the liturgy lies in its direct impact on the soul of the faithful. Doubtless for many Russians the rites and aesthetics of the liturgy would come first, yet the substance of it is the mystic association with the Saviour which breeds joy and humility and a real sensing of God.

The "fool in Christ" or *yurodivyi* often expressed this spiritual attitude of the Russian people toward Christian humility and understanding of God. Many of them rejected conventional clothing and behavior and alienated themselves from society in order to free themselves of the latter and reach higher levels of spiritual concentration. The *yurodivyi* believed that the world of men and God's truth are radically separated, and consequently

they separated themselves from the world of man to better find the truth and to serve Christ uncompromisingly. These *yurodivyi* used to be a peculiar feature of Russian Orthodoxy and were perhaps very typical of Russian religious psychology. Lev Tolstoy may be considered, to some extent, as a *yurodivyi*.

To dispel any misconception that the trends and features described above are characteristic only of a Church elite, one has only to analyze the meaning of the liturgy to the Russian soul. The liturgy, with its abundance of experiences and thoughts, is the center of Russian religious life and is recognized as such by the believers themselves. In a book, *The Year of the Lord*, Ivan Shmelev shows to what extent the common man lives, or at least used to live before 1917, by the Church. The pattern of daily life of the middle class and the laborers is depicted as being conditioned, perhaps often subconsciously, by piety and as being inseparable from Church tradition, as, for instance, the celebration of the Christian Holy Days. Shmelev's simple description of Russian life accurately reflects the popular Russian piety.

From this closeness of the life of the people to the Church arose the notion of "Holy Russia." Although one notices in this notion echoes of the "third Rome" theory, this idea of "Holy Russia" was not conceived in monastic circles, but rather grew out of the expression of popular feelings. This notion represents something godly in the common soul. It represents the men of ascetics and those of justice. It represents all those who, as Kassian says in Turgenev's work, "walk on earth and seek righteousness." This idea of righteousness stems from the simple people who see and feel God's truth and bear suffering with humility. "Holy Russia" is still an ideal that carries a particular Church nationalism, not a narrow one, but rather one which evinces a faith in the special calling of Russia. There is in this "Holy Russia" neither a trace of theocracy nor of political ambition, but it represents rather a national dedica-

tion to the sacred. Thus the notion of "Holy Russia" epitomizes the truth of Russian popular piety. Of course, each nation has its own sense of piety and holiness. The main characteristics of the Russian sense is that it is free from earthly biases and that it is creatively dedicated to finding and saving Christ's truth. Humility, at the same time, calls for self-sacrifice, a giving of oneself to living actively both for and with God.

It is natural now to expect the question: "How much of this 'Holy Russia' has been preserved under the present atheistic and militantly godless power of the Communist government?" This question is not easily answered. The country which was once an "Orthodox Russia" is now mute and is not permitted to express its feelings. The meager publications of the Russian Central Ecclesiastic Administration do not supply sufficient material for an answer. Contacts by foreign travelers with the Russian clergy and believers are rare and accidental. Some recent visitors to Russia claim that the churches are overcrowded and that Church life is striving to improve, while others report that most of the churchgoers are old and that the total number of them is rather low, and in any case considerably lower than in prerevolutionary Russia or in the present-day United States.

Of considerable value for an evaluation of the spiritual life in Soviet Russia are the reports of some Orthodox priests from the West who managed to penetrate into territories of the Soviet Union occupied by Germany during the last war. Their opinions are almost unanimous: a very great part of the population flocked into the churches as soon as they became open and the intensity of their confessions and their practices of faith surpassed all expectations. The persecutions and anti-God propaganda in many instances only hardened their beliefs and their inner attachment to Christ.

On the other hand, there is little doubt that an important part of the Russian population forgot Christ and the Church and became either anti-religious or simply non-religious. There

is hardly any way to determine statistically how many of the Russian people remained faithful to the traditional ideas of piety and how many of them are temporarily or permanently lost as members of the Church. But do statistics ever help in evaluating the spiritual life of a man or a people?

What was said of the Russian people and their attitudes and outlook toward the Church can also be said of the present-day Church leadership. Some of the clergy betrayed their faith and duties, while others perished as uncompromised professors of the eternal truths, and many others remained with or later returned to the Church, accepting the inevitable and imposed compromises with the God-rejecting secular power. The accusation that the Russian Orthodox hierarchy in its attitude toward secular problems, as, for instance, the defense of the country or the pro-Soviet movement for peace, has been too closely associated with the Communist dictatorship is often heard. In some instances these accusations may be justified. It should not be forgotten, however, that the very essence of the Orthodox Church system—the traditional transmission of grace and power in the Church from one bishop to another—required the salvation of some basic skeleton of the Church administration and consequently some adjustment with the secular government. It is true that a clandestine Church organization, unauthorized by the government, existed for some years in the 1920's, but the longer, even semi-permanent existence of such "catacombs" churches was impossible in view of the contemporary techniques of the police and their persecutions. Indeed, it should be remembered that the temporal, secular compromise with the worldly has not undermined in the least the spiritual foundations of the Church. Russian Christianity today, often purified by the fire of persecution, is more traditional, more liturgic than ever. All attempts at compromise on spiritual, dogmatic, and liturgic grounds have been refuted without hesitation not only by the clergy but, also, which is more important, by the overwhelming majority of the believers themselves.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I have tried not to idealize the Russian religious spirit nor the Russian people but rather to present and describe the historical trends and notions which all contribute to Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian soul. The Russians have, or at least did have prior to the revolution, one unique feature. This is that they believe their country to be inhabited by sanctity. They are the only Christian people who pray for their country as an holy entity. This serves to show the end the Russian soul seeks to attain, that of the transfiguration of Russia.