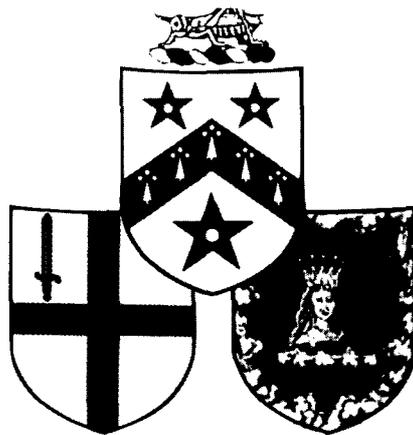


*G R E S H A M*  
*C O L L E G E*



**RELIGION IN RUSSIA**  
**ON THE EVE OF THE MILLENNIUM**

Three Lectures given by

**THE REVEREND PROFESSOR RICHARD CHARTRES MA BD**  
**Gresham Professor of Divinity**

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## RELIGION IN RUSSIA ON THE EVE OF THE MILLENNIUM

The Reverend Richard Chartres MA BD  
Gresham Professor of Divinity

Lecture 1, 30 April 1987

### The Russian Orthodox Church before the Revolution.

When Sir Thomas Gresham was laying the foundations of that fortune which eventually was to endow Gresham College, and to establish the Professorships, including the Professorship of Divinity, his elder brother, John Gresham was engaged in some much more risky speculations. In particular, John Gresham was part of a consortium which in 1553 raised £6,000 to send three ships to search for 'the great North Eastern passage for the discovery of Cathay and diverse other regions', as they said. Their three ships were heavily laden with trade goods, because England at the time was finding it extremely difficult to export her textiles and she needed new markets urgently. That expedition was commanded by Sir Hugh Willoughby, whom Richard Hakluyt the Tudor historian describes as 'a most valiant gentleman, and well borne'. But in the event, Willoughby himself perished, with his ship the 'Bona Esparansa', and a sister ship the 'Confidensa' and it was left to Richard Chancellor, the Captain of the third ship, the 'Edward Bona Ventura' to stumble upon the White Sea and to land near the present day port of Archangel and bring Tudor England and the Muscovy of Czar Ivan the Terrible in contact for the first time.

Chancellor had sailed so far off the beaten track, that as Hakluyt says: 'He came at last to a place where he found no night at all, but a continual light and brightness of the sun, shining clearly upon a huge and mighty sea', that was the White Sea. Chancellor landed, was befriended by some of the inhabitants, and summoned to the Russian Court to meet Czar Ivan the Terrible, and to present the Czar with a letter from King Edward VI. This letter demonstrates the close connection between trade and Divinity in the 16th century, because it argued that trade was essentially good. It was a God given and God intended activity. 'It was intended by God, since the God of heaven and Earth' and I am quoting from Edward VI's letter, 'had provided that not all things should be found in one region, to the end that one should have need of another'. So trade was seen as the way in which nations of the Earth were brought together. A very sophisticated concept of the interdependence of the world economy indeed. In this case, the Czar wanted military stores for his wars against the Tartars, and he could not get them, for obvious reasons, from his nearest western neighbours who were very suspicious of his intentions. England appeared to be an ideal trading partner.

Very soon English merchants were licensed by the Czar to trade throughout his Dominion. As a result of Chancellor's return to England, the Muscovy Company was granted a charter by Philip and Mary, who were now on the throne, Edward VI having died. The name of Sir John Gresham, the elder brother of Thomas who founded the Professorship of which I have the honour to occupy at the moment, the name of Sir John Gresham stands first among the Assistants of the new Muscovy Company.

Now Richard Chancellor also returned with some highly uncomplimentary observations on the state of Russian religion in the 16th century. He notes that the Russian Church follows the Greek model. He records his consternation, (because Russian services, and I expect that many here this afternoon have actually participated in Russian services, and Russian services, then as now were long) to see that there were no pews. He also notes that: 'When the Priest is at service, they gaggle and they duck like to so many geese'. He sees idolatory in the honour paid to the icons, and Chancellor is shocked particularly by seeming Russian ignorance of the Ten Commandments.

Now, these condescending remarks by a man who was in many ways an admirable representative of the Tudor age, on the Russian Church, are generally echoed by most foreign visitors to Russia until the 19th century, when the romantic myth of the Slav soul, taught even foreign observers to look for rather different things in the Russian Church. At this 20th century the situation has changed still further. We westerners have had the opportunity to learn from the Russian Diaspora, the exiles in our midst, something of the spiritual depth of Russian Orthodoxy. At the same time a revolution in our aesthetic sensibilities has revealed the once despised icon, in its Greek variety now showing in such glorious profusion in Picadilly, ~~has revealed the once despised icon~~ in all its subtlety and power. So things have changed. We are able to see these things with a rather different eye, and emancipate ourself from the condescension of Chancellor and his successors.

Also this subject is now of extraordinary fascination. Because after 70 years of determined opposition, I am speaking in measured modest ways, the Russian Orthodox Church has not only survived, but today it is exhibiting a new vitality, which even if you only rely on the evidence provided by atheist publications, is making a real impact and new converts, particularly among young urban intellectuals. But this is to look forward to later lectures in this series.

This lecture is essentially a historical background. So let us now return to the beginning of the story, nearly 600 years before the time of Sir John Gresham and Richard Chancellor. Let us return to the 10th century when Moscow did not exist and the centre of Russian culture was Kiev, in what we now call the Ukraine. The ruler of Kiev in the later part of the 10th century was Prince Vladimir and it is the millennium of his baptism in 988 in the River Dnieper, which will be celebrated next year in the Soviet Union. The way in which that event is celebrated by Church and State in July of 1988, will provide many fascinating clues about the intentions of the present regime towards the most venerable and influential body in the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church. There are older Christian Churches than the Russian Orthodox Church within the Soviet Union, the churches of the Georgians, and the churches of the Armenians, but none can really compare with the Russian Orthodox Church, for its impact upon Russian Culture.

Vladimir was eventually canonised. He became Saint Vladimir the convertor. He was given the title of 'Vladimir, equal to the Apostles'. A surprising Saint, was Saint Vladimir in many ways. He was reputed to have had a harem of 800 concubines, and a contemporary German chronicler described him as: Fornicator Eummensus et Crudelis. And even those whose Latin is a bit rusty will get the message from that. Doubtless Vladimir's conversion to Eastern Orthodox Christianity had a great deal to do with power politics. Byzantium,

the modern city of Istanbul, was the centre of the eastern Christian Empire, under the Emperor Basil II, who was on the throne during the time of Prince Vladimir. Basil II was known by the title Bulgaroctonos which might be translated 'Bulger Basher'. He was vigorous, and his empire was a vigorous and robust empire in the latter part of the 10th century and an alliance with the Byzantines against the peoples of the Steppes, the nomads who were always threatening to disrupt trade between Kiev and Zsagrad, as the Russian called the City of Byzantium. An alliance to protect that trade was obviously highly desirable, because there were very strong trading links between Kievan Russia and Byzantium and these ties, political and military and trading were cemented by the marriage of Prince Vladimir to the Emperor's sister, Anna.

We have an account of the events leading up to the baptism of Prince Vladimir in the Russian Primary Chronicle. Which is our most significant documentary source for Russian history of this time, compiled probably by monks in the 12th century, but relying on earlier records and traditions. Political themes, I have already mentioned, are not absent from the Russian Primary Chronicle, but the other emphasizes in the Chronicle's interpretation of the events of Vladimir's baptism and the events which lead up to it, help to illuminate the appeal and strength of Orthodox Christianity in Russia through the centuries. Vladimir, like most of the Eastern Slavs, began life as a pagan. He was a devotee of the personified spirits of nature, with Perune the God of thunder and lightning being especially significant.

The Primary Chronicle says that this pagan prince was visited by a succession of missionaries from more subtle and sophisticated religions. He was visited by Moslem missionaries, Jewish missionaries, German emissaries sent by the Pope and of course he was visited by Greek missionaries as well. I have to tell you that the Moslem mission received pretty short shrift, because early on they revealed that conversion to Islam would involve total abstinence from alcohol, and the Russian Primary Chronicle quotes Prince Vladimir as saying: 'Drinking is the joy of the Russes, we cannot exist without that pleasure'. (So you see that General Secretary Gorbachev's campaign is against an evil with very deep historical roots.)

Vladimir and his Bouyars, his councillors, after receiving all these missionaries, who had totally confused them, decided to send out an embassy of their own and to do a kind of 'Which?' report on contemporary 10th century creeds and to come back with a report of the various available religious options. The report of those ambassadors is famous, and helps us to understand some of the abiding appeal of Orthodoxy in Russia. I am going to read to you from a translation of the Russian Primary Chronicle:

The Ambassadors had come back, they returned to their own country, and the Prince called together his bouyars and the elders, and Vladimir then announced the return of the envoys, and suggested that their report be heard. he commanded that them to speak out and the Envoys reported:

When we journeyed among the Bulgars [who were at that time Moslems] we beheld how they worship in their temple called the Mosque, while they stand, ungirt. The Bulgar, bows, sits down, looks hither and thither like one possessed and there is no happiness among them, instead only sorrow, and a dreadful stench. Their religion is not good.

And then we went among the Germans [ these are the Roman Catholics] and saw them performing many ceremonies in their temples, but we beheld

no glory there.

Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worshipped their God, [we know that the Russian envoys were taken to see the liturgy in the church which still stands in Istanbul to this day, the Church of the Holy Wisdom, built by the Emperor Justinian.] and we knew not whether we were in Heaven or on Earth. For on Earth there is no such splendour or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations, for we cannot forget that beauty. Every man after tasting something sweet, is afterward unwilling to accept that which is bitter, and therefore we cannot dwell longer here.

'We cannot forget that beauty', and that note is evident and has been evident in Russian Orthodox worship since the beginning until now. The power of beauty is still very evident in the worship of the Russian Church. For us beauty is often suspect. We say sometimes, that it is only skin deep, and beauty has become the Cinderella of that Trinity of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. But without beauty, married to goodness, goodness can sometimes lose its fascination and its attractiveness and be enfeebled. But that subject of the importance of beauty in worship and faith and religion, is one we must leave for another series of lectures.

The conversion of Vladimir to Eastern Orthodoxy, and his reception of missionaries from Zagrab, from the Holy City of Byzantium, had profound cultural consequences. Russian culture linked up with the East, with Eastern Christendom, not with the West. This has played an obvious role in, for example, the tragic history of the relations between Russia and Poland. The conversion of Vladimir introduced a very important social institution into Russia- the Church- which as well as being an institution of great spiritual significance, was one of great economic and social significance as well. It had a profound impact, this conversion, this turning to Eastern Christendom, on art and architecture. The first stone buildings were erected under Church influence. One of them still stands. I wonder how many of you have seen the Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom, again, Santa Sophia consciously based on the great Santa Sophia which they had seen in Byzantium, which still stands in Kiev, built in 1037.

Also in art, in icon painting the Byzantine model was supreme, and we shall consider some of the artistic inheritance of the Church later in this lecture. In literature as well, there was a profound influence. The script still in use in Russia is another cultural consequence of the conversion of Prince Vladimir. As you know, that script is called Cyrillic, and it was Cyril and Methodius, the 9th century missionaries to the Slavs, who devised a script to enable the liturgical books of the Eastern Orthodox Church to be translated into the vernacular. The modern view is that Cyril probably devised the more primitive system, the Glagolitic alphabet, and it was Methodius who refined that system and is responsible for the Cyrillic alphabet, which in a much more simplified form, but still recognisable form, is in use in the Soviet Union to this day, and which was introduced into Russia via the service books of the Orthodox Church.

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Now the golden age of the Kiev which was so closely linked to the culture and the art of Byzantium, was brought to an end by the Mongul invasions. The City of Kiev itself was devastated in 1240 and Russia split up into a number of

semi-independent Princedoms, owing tribute to the successors of the Mongol invaders, the Golden Horde. The centre of gravity of Russian culture moved northwards into the forest region. In the midst of political disintegration, the Church managed to hold on to an all Russia organisation. It was able to sustain a national identity and at times also to encourage a national resistance.

The great spiritual figure of the 14th century was Saint Sergius, who died in 1392. He played an important part in the emergence of Moscow as the leading Russian Princedom. He also played a very significant part in nerving the grand prince of Moscow, Dimitri Donscoy to claim and to win in battle more independence from the Golden Horde. Dimitri Donscoy is a name to conjure with in Russian Orthodox history. When the Russian Orthodox Church collected money to finance a tank column in the second world war, it was known as The Dimitri Donscoy Column, to remind everybody, even under Stalin, how the Church and the spirit of the nation had for so many centuries been connected.

St Sergius himself began as a forest hermit. He refused high office in the Church, he was not burdened by a vast amount of church administration, as so often in Russian spiritual history. He stood outside the official hierarchy, but nevertheless became an influential spiritual arbitrator and reconciler, exemplifying a humility and a simple kindness which attracted pilgrims from all over the country. The monastery which was founded around him, the monastery of the Holy Trinity, St Sergius Monastery, (which still exists to this day, in a city renamed after an old Bolsheviek - Zargorsk), still attracts a stream of pilgrims. Mrs Thatcher was one of the most recent pilgrims to the monastery founded around St Sergius in the 14th century. It survives not only as a pilgrimage centre, but as a seminary, training priests for the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Saint was also a very considerable influence on the most famous artist of the period, who was Andre Rubliev. Icon painting was part of the enduring Byzantine inheritance of the Church, but it had already by this period been given an authentic Russian twist. Icons have a central importance in the lives of ordinary Russians. Richard Chancellor, when he visited Russia in the 16th century was very disapproving about it. He noted that it was the icon which was first saluted when a man entered his neighbours home. He would say 'where is God?' and he would see the icon corner and his first salutation would be to the icon. Having an icon in the room is like having a consul from heaven permanently resident in your room, it is a living presence there, at the corner of the room. Painted with prayer, and with the invocation of the Holy Spirit, and according to traditional formulae. Icons are capable of conveying very complex theological statements. They are not, as some westerners thought until quite recently, just incompetently executed failures to achieve the kind of naturalistic representation with which we have been familiar since the Renaissance. They are not that at all. Within a very complex tradition, with a colour code, within a tradition of significant gestures. Everything about an icon has a meaning. Every gesture means something, the colours mean something. The subjects are highly stylised. They are traditional subjects, but nevertheless in this very complex vocabulary there is room for individuality. There were at this time in the 14th century various schools which had grown-up in Russia. I just want to mention very briefly three of them which you should be able to recognise quite easily:

There is the School of Susdal, which is a smallish town now, not very far from Moscow. That was perhaps the earliest distinguished school of

Russian icon painting, 13th century. You can recognise the Susdal icon by its cool and silvery appearance. It is elegant and graceful, and in considerable contrast with the icons of Nodgarod, the second school, which flourished at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. Warmer, yellow, golden, monumental. But perhaps the most famous one so far as we are concerned is the school of Moscow, at the turn of the 14th and 15th century again, led by Andre Rublev. His masterpiece is the Old Testament Trinity, based on that story of the three angels who visited Abraham, in the Old Testament, and sat below the oaks of Mamree. The Old Testament Trinity, which was painted, you must remember, at a time of chaos, at a time when Russia was still not totally emancipated from the Monguls. A time of war and violence. Andre Rublev, the painter of that icon, was under the direct influence of St Sergius, and the icon is a communication of Harmony, Peace and Light. It is an expression of harmony, peace and light at a very violent time.

Well, the fall of the City of Constantinople itself in 1453 left the Church in Russia rather isolated. It was at this point that Russian priests began to speculate about the Messianic significance of Russian religion, the so called Doctrine of the Third Rome was promulgated. First we find a trace of it in a letter of 1510. A monk wrote to his Emperor saying that the first Rome, old Rome had gone down because it fell into heresy. New Rome, the City of Constantinople had been destroyed by the Infidels, and now, the Russian Church, and Russian Christians, stood alone as the third Rome, and that third Rome, it was believed by many, would never perish. It would stand permanently. There would be no further Romes. So from this period there was an increasing sense of the significance for world Christian history of the institution of the Russian Orthodox Church. That sense is still very profoundly present in Russian Orthodox thought.

It was clothed in an institutional form later in the 16th century, in 1589, when the Church, as a result of Boris Godinov's diplomatic skill, managed to win recognition from the Patriarch in Constantinople, of its independence, and the head of the Russian Church was promoted to be the Patriarch. Boris' friend Joab was the first Patriarch. Never was the symphony between Patriarch and Czar greater than in this period at the very beginning of the 17th century, at the beginning of the Romanov dynasty, when the first Romanov Czar reigned with his father as Patriarch. So Church and State were in a balance, in a symphony at this period. It is also a period when we have a remarkable picture of the austere spiritual life, the interior life of the Russian Orthodox Church, given to us by Paul, Archdeacon of Aleppo in Syria. He came with his father, who was the Patriarch of Antioch, in 1654, to visit the Russian Church, and to solicit some arms and some financial support for his poor diocese in Syria.

Paul has left a very good account of the five years these two Syrian Christians spent travelling around Muscovy. Paul says this about the state of the Russian Church in the 17th century;

Anyone wishing to shorten his life by five to ten years, should travel into Muscovy, and walk there as a religious man, making a show of perpetual abstinence and fasting and rising at midnight for devotions.

He must also banish all jokes and renounce the eating of opium.

The Archdeacon, and his father the Patriarch were thoroughly glad to get back to Syria, under the Turks who provided a much more relaxed and congenial religious environment than there was in Holy Moscow. But in this period of great austerity, still the visible, the external form, the beauty of the

worship, of the liturgical life was of extreme importance. The importance attached to ritual was very great. Ritual had to be performed perfectly down to the last scintilla. The trouble was that certain errors had crept into Russian Orthodox liturgical texts. There were errors in the translation from Greek, and other mistakes had crept into these texts.

There was little done about it until the accession of the Patriarch Nikon, in the middle of the 17th century. Paul of Aleppo knew him. He became Patriarch in 1652. He decided that Russian ritual should conform to that of the monasteries on Mount Athos, and that, in particular, the sign of the cross should no longer be made with two fingers, to represent the two nature's of Christ, but with three fingers, to represent the three persons of the Holy Trinity. This provoked an uproar. Do not let us be condescending about that. At a similar period, people in England were still battling away about the propriety of signing people with the sign of the Cross in baptism. Ritual was considered to be an integral part of ones living out of the Christian faith. Any departure from tradition was regarded, particularly in Russia, with enormous suspicion. Nikon's changes provoked an uproar. He was opposed by some of the most energetic and godly clergy, who took their stand on old Russian tradition.

The most notable 'Old Believer', as the anti-Niconites came to be called, was the Arch-Priest Abarchum. He is of particular importance, not only in the religious history of Russia, but in its cultural history. His autobiography is one of the first and greatest literary classics of vernacular Russian. Until then most literary work had been done in the ecclesiastical language of Church Slavonic, and not in vernacular Russian. Abarchum was confident on the value of the Moscovite tradition, the way of the third Rome. He endorsed this doctrine fully:

Rome fell away long ago and lies prostrate. Among you Greeks, orthodoxy is a mongrel breed, and no wonder, for by the violence of the Turkish Mahood, you have become impotent, and hence forth it is you who should come to us to learn. By the gift of God, among us there is autocracy, until the time of Nikon the Apostate, in our Russia under our pious Princes and Czars the orthodox faith was pure and undefiled.

He was not broken by savage beatings and persecutions, the death of his children, by hunger, by imprisonment for 15 years, and by many other privations. He endured all this until this obstinately metaphysical man was burnt at the stake in 1682. His autobiography remains an extraordinary testament of courage of an awesome and even extravagant kind, which has always been visible in Russian history. Russians have been able to suffer. You only have to think how in World War II they suffered for a cause- some of them were prepared to festoon themselves with explosives, make themselves into living bombs, before throwing themselves under advancing German tanks. That is the spirit of the Arch-Priest Abarchum. It would be terrible to sentimentalize the sacrifices he made and his endurance. The cost is clear in a moving human exchange in his autobiography, when he and his wife are tramping back from exile in Siberia. The poor woman says to her husband:

How long Arch-Priest are we to suffer this?

He answered, 'Until our very death Marchovna' and she replied with a sigh:

So be it Petrovich. Let us plod on.

Despite persecution, Old Belief spread among some of the most spiritually

vital elements of the population. It obviously played a part in weakening the Church when the Church came to face the onslaught of Peter the Great and his westernising policies. The Old Believers persist to this day. In the 19th century, informed Czarist officials thought that they probably made up about one sixth of the orthodox population. They were very large, very numerous, particularly in the merchant class. Old Belief does persist unto this day, and I myself have been called a 'damned Nikonite' when I attempted to join a service in a Moscow graveyard. It is possible to meet leaders of Old Belief under more auspicious circumstances.

The events of the late 17th century, the great split between the Old Believers and those who followed the reforms of the Patriarch Nikon, created conditions in which some of the most conservative and traditional parts of the Russian population, people with staunch family ties and a highly moral outlook were barred from advancement. They were shut out of sympathy with the Czarist government and its policies. People often think of the situation of the Church before the Revolution as being the creature of the State, of being just a dull echo of Czardom. When you actually look at the spiritual situation of the Churches before the Revolution, that is a gross over simplification.

Peter the Great attempted to bring the Church under control. No longer a symphony between Patriarch and Czar, a nearly equal partnership. Peter desired to turn the Church into a Department of State, headed by a secular bureaucracy. Because, you see a Patriarch can call for loyalty, for love and devotion. It is very much harder to focus devotion on a Synod, on a collective leadership, even on an Holy Synod, (or perhaps even more on a General Synod). The Petrine reforms, which were to end the years of the Patriarchs, and to exert authority over the Church by means of a secular bureaucracy, put the clergy of the Russian Church into a very difficult position. They depended for the most part on the good will and donations of their parishioners, the peasants. But at the same time they were forced to be agents of the State. One of the things you had to do if you were a Russian Orthodox priest in the 19th century, was to supply the Ministry of Defence with information on prospective recruits to the Army in your village. You can imagine that that did not make for harmonious relations with your flock. During the 18th century, the cleavage between the clean shaven European elite, and the masses, also expressed itself in religious terms. There was a good deal of contempt for religion and for the Church, among those who were influenced, as Peter was, by Western thinking. Among the masses, faith and even credulity flourished, but it was part of the great cleavage between the classes in Russia that there was a great deal of cynicism and scepticism about the Church and about orthodoxy among the elite.

A wonderful picture of the somewhat chilling credulity of the Russian believer, can be had from the pages of the biography, The Memoirs of Casanova. Casanova visited St Petersburg in the 18th century. He was there for the great ceremony of the blessing of the waters of the River Neeva at the beginning of the year in January, and for the baptism of certain children specially selected for this honour. They were brought out, onto the ice, the Neeva is a great wide deep river, a hole had been knocked in the ice. The idea was that the children should be picked-up by the Bishop, by a foot and plunged into the icy waters three times and so baptised. Casanova records that when he was there, the bishop unfortunately lost his grip on one of the children, who went scudding away under the surface of the ice. He expected

that the parents would turn on the venerable man and lynch him. but instead the Bishop was able to turn round and say 'The Lord has taken him' and there were immense cheers.

That story is the sort of tale that excited cynicism and hostility among the elite. And the elite in the 18th century, took further action against the Church. Catherine the Great nationalised the estates of the monasteries, and the Church had its income cut down to only 10% of its former annual income. The government did very little to assist the Church from its own funds, and only from the 1890s did any regular subsidy to support the Clergy in the poorer parishes, become to be paid. The Church had immense economic problems because of State interference. Peter had not only subordinated the Church to the imperial bureaucracy, but he also tried to separate it from the main stream of cultural development. Whilst Peter declared that the vernacular Russian dialect should be the official literary language for secular purposes, and whilst he simplified the alphabet to that end, he insisted that the Church should continue to use in its services and in its writings, Church Slavonic. A little later under western influence, the language in which the Clergy was instructed in Seminaries came to be Latin. So you see what the situation was, in these seminaries, which were largely reserved for the offspring of the Clergy, (you became a clergyman most frequently because your father was a clergyman). The seminaries were reserved for priests, sacristans, other church officials, and the clergy came to constitute a separate cast. Educated in one foreign language, Latin, to serve in another foreign language, so far as most of the people were concerned, Church Slavonic. The clerical caste, therefore, came even to speak Russian with a very peculiar accent, with many archaisms. They became the butt of many many Russian jokes.

The social station of most of the clergy was also very low indeed. A Russian Priest told me that he heard the Patriarch Alexi, (who was the present Patriarch's predecessor, a man who had been born to the purple, he had got a sort of rather wealthy aristocratic background), explain how his pious father was a very kind man, he was jolly nice to his chaplain, the priest he kept about the place. For example, on Feast Days, he would often say, to this chaplain, 'Come into the hall Chaplain, and have a glass of Vodka'. And the priest who was telling me the story began to get very agitated. Do you see the point, the man was probably a candidate of theology and he was not even invited into the drawing room, because the social station of the clergy was so low.

The story about the Patriarch Alexi illustrates another problem. The leadership of the Church was almost totally divorced and out of sympathy with those who were in ordinary parishes. The bishops were recruited from the ranks of the celibate monks, or from widowers, or at least priests who had given an oath of celibacy. Therefore they found it very difficult to understand the lives of the married parish clergy and all their difficulties. They came from a totally different background and tradition.

So there was great difficulty. There was government action to try and bring the church under control. There were economic difficulties. There was a great gap in sympathy in the Church itself, between the monkish celibate hierarchs, and the married struggling parish clergy. A great gulf between rulers and ruled, married and unmarried. This situation is brilliantly described for us in the work of Professor Gregory Freese, who has written a

recent book on the state of the Russian Orthodox clergy in the 19th century. In it we have a wealth of provincial evidence, never before published in the west, to illustrate just how serious the demoralisation was, in the Russian Church in the 19th century. Little wonder that the seminaries, the places where the the sons of the sacristans, the priests and the other church officials were being educated, became nurseries of revolt, nurseries of nihilism and even atheism. You will remember, of course, that Stalin started his career by imbibing revolutionary ideas at the Typhliss theological academy. He was training to be a priest and he used to make very grim jokes about it later on in his career as we will hear in a later lecture.

So there was, on the eve of the Russian Revolution, much that was wrong. There was also sign of spiritual revival in the 19th century. Once again, as it was in the days of Saint Sergius, connected not always with those who were the official hierarchs, but with the elders, with the spiritual guides in the monasteries, of great authority.

At the same time there was a spread of protestantism in 19th century Russia. English missionaries, aristocratic missionaries like Lord Radstock, went to spread the gospel in 19th century Russia and that is why there is such a flourishing Baptist Church in Russia now. It is owed to those 19th century initiatives.

So the Church was showing some spiritual vitality, some life, but it was burdened with immense problems. It was by no means the willing agent of the State in the 19th century. Professor Freese has shown how successfully and how doggedly the Bishops fought to thwart the government's attempts to control the life of the Church. It was burdened with immense problems, and still, on the eve of the Revolution the Orthodox Church numbered 117 million believers. It had 48,000 Churches. It had 35,000 primary schools. It was an institution of immense significance, and all pervasive throughout Russia. But it lacked strong leadership; Peter the Great had seen to that. It came into the Russian Revolution without a very clear strategy and without very clear and strong leadership.

As the Revolution broke out, the Holy Synod, in fact refused the request of its secular overlord, the Over-Procurator, to rally to the defence of the crumbling monarchy. In July 1917, the Holy Synod said that the course of events up to that time had been one for satisfaction, and proclaimed that the hour of general freedom for Russia had come. So the Russian Orthodox Church by no means went into the first stages of the Russian Revolution entirely regretfully. It had suffered a very great deal, particularly from the time of Peter the Great. But it was badly placed to respond to the events of 1917 onwards. That is the story of my next lecture.

## RELIGION IN RUSSIA ON THE EVE OF THE MILLENNIUM

The Reverend Richard Chartres MA BD  
Gresham Professor of Divinity

Lecture 2, 28 May 1987

The Christian Church in the Soviet Period.

Today I want largely to look at the fortunes of the Russian Orthodox Church, the main Christian body in the Soviet Period, after the Revolution of 1917.

Now it will not come as a surprise to anyone here, that atheism, for the regime which has ruled the Soviet Union since 1917, is a precondition for social progress. Marx formulates the position thus:

Abolition of religion, as an illusory happiness of the people, is necessary for the creation of its real happiness.

It is in this sense that Marx can describe religion as the 'opiate of the people'. It is a fantasy world. Lenin calls it 'moonshine', which is simply a distraction from the real business of creating real happiness through improving the material conditions and the social organisation of the community.

Both Christianity, of course, and Marxist-Leninism, aim at the transformation of human beings, indeed, the creation of a new type of man. The fact is that their strategies differ very widely, and competition between these two attempts to create the new human being is almost inevitable. With the power of the modern state at its disposal, the State's treatment of the Christian churches throughout the 70 years since the Revolution, has at times made it seem very unlikely that there would be any kind of Church at all to celebrate next year's millennium of the introduction of Orthodox Christianity to Russia. That is the theme of today's lecture. How has the Church survived in these last 70 years in the Soviet Union? Through what trials has it passed, and what has been the cost of its surviving?.

When the Revolution occurred, there was an ambivalent attitude towards it on the part of many church people. There was consensus among Churchmen, that the changes forced upon the Church by Peter the Great, had hobbled and poisoned church life, because Peter had attempted to turn the Church into a Department of State, responsible to a lay Over-Procurator. In addition to that, later on in the 18th century, the nationalisation of the monastic lands by the Empress Catherine, had impoverished the church, left it poor as an institution, and very heavily dependent upon contributions from an often impoverished peasantry. So at the beginning of World War I, although the Church appeared externally and statistically to be powerful, with its 117 million members, its 130 bishops, its 48,000 functioning parish churches, these statistics concealed a great deal of unease and a great deal of alienation, particularly on the part of the intelligentsia, from the Church. In the two decades before the Revolution there was a growing pressure in the Church for the restoration of a greater autonomy of Church government. The Church government in the form abolished by the Emperor Peter, was government by a Patriarch, and by Bishops assisted by Councils of Priests and lay people.

In 1917 the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, not only refused to respond to the request that it should appeal to the nation in support of the crumbling monarchy, but took the opportunity, with the installation of the provisional government, to convene an all Russian Council or Sobore, in August 1917, to make decisions about the future of church organisation in the new circumstances. This great Council agreed to proceed to the election of a Patriarch, the symbol of a more autonomous and independent Church, the first Patriarch for more than 200 years. The actual election took place very soon after the October 1917 Revolution which brought the Bolsheviki to power. Many delegates at that point recognised, with the famous theologian and orthodox writer Bulgarkov, that they were at a turning point; a turning point before an unknown future and a frightful present. They were looking for some figurehead, some focus of loyalty and affection in the turbulent times that they could see were coming. As one peasant delegate said:

"We have a Czar no more. No father whom we love. It is impossible to love a Synod, and therefore, we the peasants want a Patriarch".

This great Council, this all Russia Council, elected three candidates. Then one of them was chosen by lot, Metropolitan Tichon of Moscow, a liberal minded man, who had served previously in the Orthodox Church in North America. He it was who had the task of leading the Church in the first years of the Bolshevik Revolution. The anti-church measures were not long in coming. While the Council which elected the new Patriarch was still in session, Lenin issued some decrees which spelt out the terms under which the Church would be obliged to live under the new regime.

In a decree of January 1918, Church and State were separated. All former Church property was nationalised, and that was not only Churches, that was candle factories, charity institutions, schools, monasteries. Very importantly indeed, the Church was deprived of the status of being a legal person, which did not enable it therefore, to hold property. Property needed for Church and religious purposes, was henceforward to be leased by local government bodies to individual religious associations, made up of laymen. That was excepting some 6,000 of the greatest Churches and monasteries, buildings of particular architectural and historic interest which were confiscated. The decrees also insisted that citizens may teach and be taught religion only privately. There were to be no Sunday Schools, and citizens would henceforth be interpreted as adults only. In addition to that, (and this is perhaps not an obvious point at first sight, but a very important one as it turns out), all Church and religious associations, not only Christian ones, were declared subject to the laws governing private rather than social organizations. They were therefore deprived of the right to impose any obligatory dues, any reprimands, any punishments on their members. Since only groups of laymen were recognised as the contracting parties to the leasing of church property, clergy, including the bishops and the new Patriarch, became legally superfluous. They were to retain their influence, only as long as the laity chose to accept their orders, orders which became now, more like petitions. This is obviously a fertile breeding ground for the sort of splits in the Church which very rapidly occurred.

Church and State were obviously on collision course. In the same month in which those decrees were put-out by the new Bolshevik administration, the Patriarch admonished the Soviet government for its anti-church actions, and the persecution and terror which had begun. Patriarch Tichon's encyclical excommunicated 'all those open and secret enemies of Christ's truth engaged

in persecutions and in sewing the seeds of hatred and fratricide'.

There was retaliation. Between 1918 and 1920, in those early disordered years of the Revolution, at least 28 Bishops were murdered, thousands of priests were killed or imprisoned, and thousands more laymen. The government decided not to arrest the Patriarch himself, he was protected by a round-the-clock un-armed guard of the faithful, but they did deprive him of his ration cards, as a bourgeois parasite. That was what marked the first years of the relation between Church and State, an attempt on the one hand by the State, to eradicate and neutralise the very best elements in the Orthodox Church.

The pretext given for some of the most effective action against leading figures in the orthodox Church, arose from the Civil War, and from the drought of 1921 and 1922 which lead to the terrible famines which afflicted Russia then. The church attempted to play its part in famine relief. The Patriarch himself appealed to Parish Councils to surrender all the articles of value, with the exception of those actually needed for the sacramental worship of the Church, like chalices for communion. He ordered local churches to give up their valuables for the benefit of the starving. At first the government authorised the publication of this order in the State newspapers, but then there was a change of heart. The government itself issued a decree ordering the confiscation of all objects of value, including sacred vessels. It was largely under the pretext of putting down resistance to this decree, that some of the best Orthodox leaders were liquidated, notably the popular and intelligent Metropolitan of Leningrad, Velamin, who was shot.

The physical persecutions did not entirely thwart another extraordinary development at this period, which is still fresh in the memories of those you talk to who participated in it. That was the extraordinary internal spiritual recovery of the Church, freed from all secular and governmental interferences and obligations for the first time in over 400 years. That is also part of the story of these years. This revival in church life was one of the reasons why the government favoured not only direct confrontation with the church, particularly with its most popular and able leaders, but also pursued a divide and rule strategy. A schism from the left was fermented within the Orthodox Church, which goes under the name of 'The Renovationist Schism'. Eventually the Patriarch was placed under house arrest in May 1922, accused of resisting this collection of Church valuables, and this was the pretext for the beginning of this schism, fermented by the Bolshevik authorities to weaken the Church from within and to place its administration in more pliable hands. The chosen agents for this plan were called the Renovationists.

Although they included in their ranks some disreputable characters, that happens to all movements in disordered times, they nevertheless also possessed a good deal of enthusiasm and conviction. Some had a sincere admiration for the achievements of the Revolution, a loyalty to the social radicalism of Christianity, and they also saw the need to modernise the Orthodox Church; to bring it closer to contemporary thought. Their leaders talked in Hegalian terms of 'marrying the contemporary spirit of life'. At the end of 1922, the Patriarch still being under house arrest, the Soviet government handed over to these Renovationists, two thirds of all the functioning churches in Russia proper, and in Central Asia. That amounted to about 20,000 churches. Interestingly, the Renovationists, despite their official backing, or perhaps because of it, failed to convince the believing masses, who stayed loyal to the Church of the Patriarch. After the 1927

Declaration of Loyalty by Patriarch Tichon's successor, the Renovationists ceased to be of any great significance, or have anything to offer the authorities, and these Renovationists shared in their general religious persecution of the 1930s, and largely disappeared.

This Declaration of Loyalty made in July 1927 really was a turning point. It was made by the person who, though he did not become Patriarch until very much later, was in charge of the administration of the Church, whilst many of the other senior Metropolitans and Bishops were imprisoned: and that is Metropolitan Sergi. Now in this document, this Declaration of Loyalty, that he made to the regime in July 1927, Sergi aimed to convince the Soviet Government that it was possible to be a dedicated Orthodox Christian while at the same time recognising the Soviet Union as 'one's civic motherland, her happiness and successes being our happinesses and successes, and her misfortunes, our misfortunes'. It is a subtlety written sentence in Russian. This sentence which caused enormous uproar, both at home among Orthodox believers there and abroad. Sergi deliberately used the feminine after 'motherland', and talked about her happinesses, her successes. Of course, in Russian, the Soviet Union is in fact masculine. He hoped in this way to nuance his support for the regime, and he never actually, as the Renovationists had, endorsed the Soviet ideology or the social system.

This subtlety was generally overlooked. The Metropolitan became the object of immense hostility on the part of believers both in the Soviet Union and outside it. He was faced with the problem which has confronted the Church ever since, (and it does not seem to me that lectures in the safety of the Museum of London, are the time or the place for passing judgments on people who are dicing with their own safety, and that of their friends and the possible future physical existence of the Church). Sergi was searching for a way in which the Church as an institution could survive in the Soviet era. But, let it be noted, that even in this Declaration of Loyalty, he nowhere praised the social system that the Soviets had introduced. He only urged believers to accept that system as a reality against which it would be 'madness to struggle or even try to ignore'. He was fighting for the continued institutional survival of the Church. He could not foresee the holocaust of persecution which was to follow in the 1930s. His supporters have argued that the survival of a nucleus of regular Church organisation and administration, did permit the revival of Church fortunes, when it came in 1943 to occur under the aegis of Bishops, who, whatever their other faults, were loyal to Church tradition.

The Declaration has also been described as a transition from the position of being apolitical, which Patriarch Tichon had largely taken up, to that of internal spiritual solidarity with the Government. The heirs of Sergi's compromise have continued to be accused of compromising the internal freedom of the Church, for the sake of retaining some organisational form. That is the centre of the argument, and it is an argument that we need to ponder deeply.

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Immediately the Declaration of 1927 led to a schism in Sergi's own Church, a schism on the right, corresponding to the schism on the left fermented by the Government. It was probably only the extreme persecution which was visited on the Patriarchal Church, as upon all other churches in the 1930s, which made the heirs of Sergi's compromises, and Sergi himself after 1943, acceptable to the broad masses of the believers, and gave them sufficient credit. That

persecution of the 30's, despite the Declaration of Loyalty of 1927, gave them sufficient credit that, when times changed in the course of the Second World War, gave them sufficient credit with the believers to enable the Patriarchal Church to play such an enormously significant part in the spiritual revival of 1943 and afterwards.

It did not appear at the time as if the Declaration of Loyalty had got them very far. New laws and fiercer laws on religious association appeared in 1929, and these laws, which still form the legal framework within which the Church may operate in the Soviet Union, forbade any religious activities outside church walls; and that went for quite trivial things like hikes, or nature walks. No Mothers' Union trips to the Black Sea, no study circles, nothing of that sort. There was also an economic side to the legislation. As part of a campaign, a drive against private enterprise which began in 1929, the Church itself was treated as a private enterprise, and unrealistic rates of income tax were levied on parishes, and on clergy, as profit making private businesses. The destruction also, about the same time, of the more prosperous peasants, described by the government as Kulacks, deprived the church of its principal source of funding, in the rural areas. But despite these increasing difficulties, the religious revival continued. One of our best eye witnesses of this time, Anatole Dimittine, said that if he were asked to describe his vision of the ideal church community, 'I will always recall the Church in Petrograd in the late '20s for its spontaneous enthusiasm, study, the sermons, the revival of Church life, sisterhoods.

But in the 1930s legislative pressure was intensified by more thorough physical liquidation of Churches, Clergy and believers. I just want to give you one example. In Odessa, on the Black Sea coast, a city of half a million people, by the end of the 1930s, only one church remained open. It was Stalin's personal concession to his occultist, Academician Pilatov, who was a believer. Stalin promised Pilatov that one church, for his sake would remain open in Odessa. At first each Sunday, and then only at Easter, a priest would immerge from the crowd of believers in this church, and would celebrate the liturgy, only to be arrested the next day. After all the priests who were prepared for martyrdom had disappeared, the few deacons took their place. They were not able to celebrate the full liturgy, but they could take it a long way. They also were arrested. Then the psalm singers were also liquidated, and on the eve of the German invasion, there remained only a few laymen, praying the best they could in that one open church. Further details of the persecutions are readily available in Robert Conquest's book on the great terror, and in various other places, I particularly commend Peter Struve's book, 'Christians in Contemporary Russia', and Michael Bordeaux's collection of documents 'Patriarchs and Prophets'.

During this period, however, of intense persecution, Metropolitan Sergi continued to state publicly that there was no persecution of religion as such in the Soviet Union. As one of his associates explained;

'The feasibility of putting the brakes on the destruction of the Church undertaken by the Bolsheviks, was always our main concern. We were like chickens in a shed, from which the cook snatches out her victims in turn. For the sake of the Church, we reconciled ourselves to our humiliating position, believing her certain victory, and trying somehow to preserve her for better times'.

That was the justification offered for what was undoubtedly mendacity of the highest order.

The destruction of the church was halted, however, by the annexation of the western territories in 1939, under the pact between Hitler and Stalin. Many of these western Ukrainians and western White Russians who came under the rule of Stalin at this time, were Orthodox, and there were also some substantial minorities of Orthodox believers in the Baltic Republics. The church leadership was allowed to play a part in the consolidation of Soviet authority in these territories. By 1941, three years later, of the 4,000, (only 4,000, you will remember the figure with which we started, 48,000 functioning parish churches in 1917, well by 1941 there were only 4,000 Orthodox churches functioning) well over 70% of those were in the newly occupied territories of the west. That is what halted the physical destruction of the Church.

It was the German onslaught on Russia in 1941 which had the most dramatic effect on the Church's fortunes. Immediately Metropolitan Sergi committed the Church to active engagement in the patriotic effort:

"Let the storm come. We know that it will bring not only misfortune, but alleviation also. It will cleanse the air and blow away noxious vapours. We already see certain signs of its disinfection".

Coded language to suggest that the atmosphere was changing as far as the Church was concerned. And so it was. Anti-religious propaganda was halted and one of Sergi's associates, Metropolitan Nikolae was enrolled as a leading Soviet foreign policy spokesman. Among other services to the State, Metropolitan Nikolae was the co-signatory of a document claiming that the murder of 8,000 to 10,000 Polish Officers in the forest of Katyn had been the work of the Germans, whereas most other authorities blame the secret police, prior to June 1941 when the Germans arrived.

The Church was permitted to organise collections for the War Effort. Remember that previously charitable work on the part of the Church was against the law. Now the Church was able to collect millions of roubles to fund the construction of a new tank column, dedicated to the memory of Dimitri Donskoy, the Prince of Moscow, the 14th century Moscovite hero, who inspired by Saint Sergius had gone out to defy and defeat the Tartars. A deliberate attempt to recall the connection of the Orthodox Church and the patriotic past of the country.

In September 1943, faced with immense resurgence of Church life, behind the advancing German lines, Stalin summoned Sergi, and his two associates who were still at large, Alexii of Leningrad, and Nicolae, to a meeting in the Kremlin. We have an account of this meeting, which comes via Libiekin from Metropolitan Nicolae. Sergi asked Stalin for the re-opening of the churches, and especially of the seminaries, because of the lack of clergy. Stalin, (it is a gruesomely humorous scene) affected to be surprised by what the Metropolitan had said. 'Why?' he said 'don't you have cadres? Where have all your cadres disappeared?'. 'Everyone', says the report, 'knew that the cadres had perished in the camps'. Metropolitan Sergi replied; 'There are all sort of reasons why we have no cadres. One is that we train a man for the priesthood, and he becomes a Marshall of the Soviet Union.' A shrewd reply because Stalin had learned and imbibed his revolutionary ideals at the Typhlis Theological Seminary, and indeed the answer tickled the dictators fancy. He smiled with satisfaction.

More important business was discussed as well during this meeting. Important concessions were made to the Church. Faced with this massive and spontaneous revival of Church life in the wake of the advancing German armies, Stalin

needed to confirm the loyalty of the believers on his own side of the lines. In consequence churches and seminaries were re-opened, parishes were allowed to have bank accounts and permission was given to the meeting of the councils which had been impossible for a decade or so past. Permission was given in particular for a Council to convene to elect a Patriarch. Another Council was permitted to meet in 1945 after Sergi's death, and it was then that Alexii of Leningrad was elected Patriarch. A period of relatively relaxed Church - State relations opened, which lasted until the beginning of the '60s.

Now a contrast with the treatment meted out to the Church, just a brief word about the position of the Jewish religion at this point. As Sergi had been struggling to preserve some sort of central Church organisation, the Jewish religious establishment had been unable to do so. The Jewish religious establishment had apparently little to offer the Soviet Government in its foreign policy aims, and without a central organisation there was no one to press for the kind of concessions which the Orthodox had managed to extract. The Soviet government developed a policy in this immediate post-war period, and especially after the formation of the State of Israel, of suppressing public references to Jewry altogether, both in terms of nationality and religion, both past and present. The intention was to silence to death the rich Jewish inheritance in the Soviet Union. Even the unspeakable tragedy of the Jews under the Nazis, became publically unmentionable. Despite the fact of constant speeches and statements about the role of the Soviet Union in defeating Nazism, the tragedy became publically unmentionable. The symbol of this sentence to death by silence became Barbiya near Kiev, a place where at least 50,000 Jews were killed. That became a symbol of this policy. The poet Yetushenko in a poem called 'Barbiya' said: 'There is no monument in Babiya'. But more about the evolution of the place and position and the attitude to the Jews in the Soviet Union in my third lecture.

So in the post war period the Patriarchate continued to demonstrate its usefulness to the State. For example, the Declaration of Patriarch Alexii to the Unietts (those who preserved an eastern form of worship, but were actually loyal to the Pope, they were under the direction of the Vatican, and a lot of Unietts were brought within the Soviet Union by the adjustment of borders after the second World War), pleading with them to return to the fold of the Russian Church, and making some savage criticisms of the Vatican, helped to disguise and to justify Stalinist policies in the western Ukraine, which involved a great deal of violence and repression. It is still unclear whether the Patriarch himself was aware of the extent of the violence and the repression involved in what became a forceable incorporation of the Unietts in the Orthodox fold.

A second area, which continues to be important to this day, in which the Church demonstrated its usefulness to the State, was the Peace Campaign, made into an art form by Metropolitan Nicolae. While only the West possessed Nuclear weapons at the end of the '40s and the early '50s, there was an attempt, an understandable attempt, on the behalf of the Soviet Government, to mobilise world opinion as a kind of second line of defence. In particular Nicolae became a very significant agent of this attempt to mobilise world opinion against the United States. He developed a certain fluency in Cold War rhetoric which really takes the breath away. At the first all Soviet Union Conference for Peace, Metropolitan Nikolae called the United States 'The rabid fornicatrix of resurrected Babylon', and much more of the same sort.

Other choice statements were to follow during the Korean War. He was so extreme in the way that he expressed himself, that serious doubts have been raised as to whether he really expected to be taken seriously, or whether speaking from a Soviet context, he expected that his remarks would be discounted. Soviet delegates to international conferences will often say, 'I have to make my 'Visa Speech' now. Then will come some denunciation of some aspect of western policy. So it is possible that Nikolae expected his extreme and intemperate language to be discounted. Soviet citizens have a hugely developed capacity for reading between the lines of any statement. They have a very high resistance for propaganda of this kind.

The propagandistic activities of the Church were the price that her leaders were paying for carrying out real pastoral work at home. If you look at the same Metropolitan Nikolae's sermons, what do you find there? You find deep religious sincerity. You find a concern for Christian ethics,. You certainly find a very gloomy view of the world as a dark and sinful place . It is these sermons, and his real work of trying to energise the Church inside Russia, that made Metropolitan Nikolae, despite his propaganda speeches, greatly beloved by Russian believers; Russian believers, who very often saw his work in the international sphere as just a necessary evil.

Now, do you see how the atmosphere has changed. The contrast with the late '20s and early '30s is painful. At that time, priests were expelled by their parishioners from their parishes, for merely praying for Soviet leaders in the liturgy. There is a remarkable contrast here, based on bitter experience; but based also on the patriotic fervor, excited by the successes of World War II. By the time that we have this Janus-face of Metropolitan Nikolae, lies have become an accepted part of life, which people understood as paying for all sorts of good things for the internal life of the Church; like re-opened theological schools, to serve literally thousands of ordinands during the 1950s, who have rejuvenated the depleted ranks of the Russian Clergy.

These signs of activity in the Church in the '50s, did not, of course, meet with the approval of the regime, and there were alarm signals as early as 1954. There is a Central Committee resolution passed to the effect that young people were being attracted to the Church; that there was a activation of Church life , and a general increase in numbers attending services; that was the judgment of the Central Committee in 1954, and in consequence, anti-religious propaganda gradually increased again, in the later '50s particularly.

In 1961, which was a fateful year in the modern story of the Russian Church, following some intensification of the anti-religious drive, the Patriarch and the Bishops were prevailed upon to approve new regulations for the organisation of parishes, which effectively demoted parish priests, reduced their significance and influence in the parish, whilst boosting the powers of small numbers of lay people, much more susceptible to pressure from the Soviet authorities. This proved to be a hugely successful weapon in the struggle which followed, in which probably over 10,000 parish churches were actually closed down. About half the total number. This is very much in living memory, and largely ignored or discounted by western opinion at the time. This happened in the early '60s.

At the same time, monasteries were a particular target. Their number was reduced from 90 in the mid '50s, to 17 or 18 only, a decade later. They fell

foul of economic pressure, detailed once again in Peter Struve's ' Christians in Contemporary Russia'. Monasteries, of course, have always been important in the spiritual economy of the Russian Church. It is there that pilgrims go to receive spiritual advice. Many faithful lay people and priests are in the habit of spending their annual holiday making pilgrimages and staying in monasteries. They were a vital part of diffusing Christian education in the Soviet period, as they had been previously; and that is why they became a particular target of the persecutions of the early '60s. Metropolitan Nicholae was forced to retire. He may have been compromised in his statements to the outside world, but there can be no doubting his loyalty to the Church in Russia itself. He was forced to retire, and the persecution of the Church under Kruschev lasted well into the middle '60s.

When conditions grew rather easier, the Church was not back to where it had been in 1939. There was still a functioning Church administration, still some churches open- but at what a cost, say the critics of the policies of those who followed in the footsteps of Metropolitan Sergi. What a cost of compromising the internal spiritual freedom of the Church, in order to gain these kind of concessions from the regime. It is something that is important for all of us to ponder, and not to make hasty and light judgments about.

In the next and final lecture I want to have a look at the religious revival in the post Kruschev era, and I want to look particularly at the startling revival in the fortunes of Islam in the Central Asian Republics. This whole series has been an attempt to provide some sort of sketch to help us to understand the signs that will be coming out of the Soviet Union in the next year or so. There are two enormously important events coming up. We shall be able to understand more clearly, after they have happened, what the implications of glasnost are for the Church. We know that the present leadership is dedicated to the pursuit of economic efficiency, but this may indeed be quite compatible with new pressure against the Church. So these two events we shall be looking very critically and very sharply to see how they are going to be handled.

The events are:

How is the Millennium of Christianity to be celebrated in the Soviet Union next year? Is the part that Christianity has played in Russian culture, is that going to be acknowledged and admitted by State figures? That will provide some sort of guide to what is happening.

The present Patriarch, it is well known, Patriarch Peemien, is ill. He is old. He is seen in public supported and rarely standing alone. When it comes to the time for the election of a new Patriarch, who is the State going to allow to be chosen? In my next lecture, I shall be glancing at some of the candidates, as well as looking at the scene more generally.

## RELIGION IN RUSSIA ON THE EVE OF THE MILLENNIUM

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Lecture 3, 25 June 1987

### The Religious Picture Today in the Soviet Union.

Some of the signs to be discerned in the Soviet Union are contradictory, and very difficult to read. So it is a rash man indeed who attempts to say anything about the subject. But I hope to have a look at three contemporary developments in the religious picture in the Soviet Union, which certainly concern the Council for Religious Affairs, which is the body charged by the government with the oversight of religious matters in the Soviet Union. I want to look at three developments which are of concern to them, certainly, and that is the resurgence of Islam in the Central Asian Republics. I want to look at Baptist advances in particular in the Ukraine, and say a word thirdly about the evidence for a real religious renaissance, particularly amongst youthful, urban intellectuals.

I just want to look at those three developments as an introduction to looking at some of the ways in which the atheist establishment has attempted to reoposte. I want to take you on a visit, if you have not been there, to the fascinating Museum of Atheism in Leningrad, and then look at some recent declarations on the subject of atheist propaganda, and then in conclusion, look at some of those contradictory signs, signs both coming from religious bodies and from State bodies, and try and identify those things we ought to be looking for as we observe the events of the celebrations marking the Millennium of Christianity in Russia, which will be held next year. We will be able to learn a very great deal from the way in which these events are treated and celebrated, and it is as well to have questions crystallised in our minds so that we can read some of the signs as they emerge.

First of all then, since I spent my two previous lectures largely talking about Orthodoxy, which is obviously justified in view of the numerical and cultural predominance of the Russian Orthodox Church, I want to turn away, for a moment, from orthodoxy to look at some other aspects of the picture of religious realities in contemporary Soviet Union, and look at these three developments. Turning first to the subject of Islam. Now Moslems in the Soviet Union have certainly not been immune from the resurgence, from the renewal of confidence which can be easily seen in other parts of the Moslem world, particularly in the Middle East. Many Soviet Moslems believe that time is really on their side. There is an underlying demographic trend which buoys up their confidence, and causes considerable perturbation in the corridors of the Council for Religious Affairs; that is that already, out of an all Russian Union population of about 262 million, the Moslem nationalities represent a block of 44 million people. That makes the Soviet Union the 6th largest Islamic country in the world. Of course this fact has been used by the Soviet Union in its foreign policy. Muffti's from central Asia have been sent of to represent the foreign policy line of the Soviet Union in the sort of places, the Holy Places of Saudi Arabia for example, where it is rather difficult for American foreign policy characters to match them. So it is a significant element in the contemporary Soviet reality. Also the birth rate

in the Islamic Republics of the Soviet Union is so much higher than it is in European Russia, that some observers think that by the year 2000 there will probably be more Moslem teenagers in the Soviet Union than there are Russian teenagers. There is this demographic trend which both buoys up the confidence of the Moslems in the Soviet Union, and also causes considerable perturbation in the ranks of the Council of Religious Affairs.

At the same time, in common with many other parts of the Soviet Union, there is in the Central Asian Republics, a rediscovery of, and a rehabilitation of the national patrimony. It is often accompanied as I know from personal experience, with a considerable sense of superiority, which the descendants of the Golden Horde have, about their relations with what is often referred to in the Soviet Union, as the Russian Elder Brother, those Russians whom the ancestors of so many of those who live in the Central Asian Republics, held tributary for so long.

There is a rediscovery and re-habilitation of the traditions, particularly the heritage of central Asian literature, which had a thousand years of very extraordinary sophistication, and also the rediscovery and rehabilitation of the more recent Holy Wars, those times in more recent history, when the inhabitants of what is now Soviet Central Asia resisted the advance of the Russians. This increased national self confidence and pride has its implications for the attitude of the people who live in the republics, through their historic faith, Islam. The way in which you refer to yourself in so many of the languages of those parts of the Soviet Union, is simply as Moslem. That is the word in your language which describes your own group. There is also a great deal of evidence of growing anti-Russian racism in those parts of the Soviet Union. Russian settlers who have moved across from the European parts of the Soviet Union, finding conditions in those parts of the Central Asian Republics so hostile, that they have moved back again. Also, something else which has happened, which has greatly improved morale and confidence among Soviet Moslems, has been increased contacts with the world outside; notably of course, and perhaps paradoxically, with Afghan Moslems. Increased Soviet involvement in Afghanistan has had a rather unforeseen spin off. One of the ways in which the Afghan population has been persuaded to take up a more positive attitude towards the Russian-backed regime in Kabul, has been the broadcasting of a great deal of Islamic material on Kabul radio. You do not jam your own allies radio stations! A great deal of this material has been heard in the Central Asian Republics and has caused an enormous amount of interest, and actually represents some of the most sophisticated Islamic material that has been available in those parts for a long time. So there is a good deal of knowledge about the renewed confidence of Islam in places like Iran, and in other parts of the Arab world. There is a good deal of personal contact with large numbers of Afghan students, not all of them by any means militant communists, who have been sent to the Soviet Union to be trained in the Universities there. So this foreign involvement has assisted what is undoubtedly, and admitted by Soviet observers as seen to be, a resurgent Islam in those Central Asian Republics.

An attempt has been made to deal with this by increasing the frequency and the sophistication of atheist propaganda. There is almost a Stakhanovite attitude to the number of atheist lectures delivered. You get regular reports of these in the press of how many atheist lectures were delivered in one year in one republic. I have the figure here for 1984 in the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic, there were no less than 35,000 atheist lectures delivered in the houses of scientific atheism in that Republic in an attempt to deal

with this rising tide. Certainly, this attempt to combat resurgent Islam, by means of literally tens of thousands of lectures, shows no sign of abating. Mr Gorbachev's attitude, which in many other ways, as we shall see later, is very hard to read on the subject of religion, his attitude towards resurgent Islam in places like Uzbekistan is certainly not in doubt. He has recently called for yet more atheistic propaganda, and of an improved kind. Also we know that scientists of various kinds, doctors, engineers, are being instructed in those parts of the Soviet Union, as a part of their general duties, to increase the amount of time they actually give to instructing the local population in atheism.

There is a very interesting series of studies on all these questions done by Alexander Benington, who is a professor at the Sorbonne, and if you want to follow up those things, his articles, and his books are very reliable, and based in the main on Soviet sources, on local newspapers in particular.

In May of this year, on the 13th and 20th, in the Literary Gazette, a notable Soviet weekly, a major two-part article appeared. Now this is how Islamic resurgence is seen from the point of view of the Soviet establishment. This article gives the reader what is described as "some horrifying facts" about the survival and even the spread of Islam in those Central Asian Republics. The article notes the proportion of the foreign radio broadcasts that are beamed into Central Asia in the various languages: Voice of America, Radio Liberty. About 90% of the broadcasts made by these stations in the Central Asian languages, are, in fact, devoted to Islam. The article also notes with alarm, that no less than 38 radio stations on the Iranian-Soviet border, are bombarding those parts of the Soviet Union with "facts" about the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The author of the articles tries to play down western assessments of the strength of the secret Suffi Brotherhoods, which pose a very considerable threat to the predominance of the Communist Party in these particular areas, but even he says that Suffism in Central Asia is "propagandised increasingly and actively among Soviet Moslems". Then he notes a very interesting phenomenon indeed; these are figures, I must stress, from an official Soviet source. He says that there are 365 Mosques open in Islamic areas, and that they are full of believers. So this author is somewhat puzzled by the widespread phenomenon of what he calls "parallel Mosques", in central Asia, in Aczabahan in parts of the Volga region in the Urals, the parallel Mosques are operating, and according to this article there are more than 1,800 of them. The author says: "What sermons are read in these parallel Mosques, and who reads them, is known only to Allah." Moslem believers, he notes, also have a parallel Mosque in Moscow.

This is a very worrying phenomenon of course, because these are unregistered, unofficial Mosques. The phenomenon obviously raises the question of whether, and the author of the article says this, "Whether or not it would be wiser and more far sighted to legalise all the parallel Mosques at once". So this question is raised, but the author of the article does not feel able to give an answer one way or the other, at the moment. Among other "horrifying facts" the author notes the continuation of most Islamic customs and he is particularly appalled at the prevalence of fasting during the month of Rhamadan.

That is one very substantial religious problem as it is perceived by the Soviet leadership. I want to go to another part of the country now, and have a look very briefly, at the advance of Protestantism, and most particularly

the Baptists in the Ukraine, an area historically with a great deal of cultural linkage to the west, particularly to Poland.

In 1967 there was a very remarkable funeral of an old man near Karkov. This old man was married to a believing wife, and he had believing children. But he himself had stood out against the religious atmosphere, and had remained a pillar of local atheism. In 1967, on his deathbed, he appears to have had a death bed repentance, and to have embraced belief, and to have indicated his support for the local Baptists. Now at his subsequent funeral there was a very unedifying scene, because as his family and the Baptist Church attempted to give him a Christian burial, his erstwhile friends in the local atheist society formed a great ring about the ceremony, and there was a fussixins, fisticuffs, an attempt to drown out the prayers, a din. This lead to the decision in 1967, to found a brass band. [I see that there is a distinguished Salvationist sitting in the audience, and he will know what an evangalistic asset a brass band can be] The Baptists came to the conclusion that nobody would be able to drown out a brass band, as they had been able to drown out that religious service.

Ten years later, in 1977 in that area, there were two brass bands. This is a very small story which does indicate the recent vigour and capacity of protestants, particulaly Baptists in the Ukraine to win new converts, to impress the young, to spread. Half of all the protestants in the Soviet Union are in the Ukraine, and indeed they have spread there. They certainly numbered about  $\frac{1}{4}$  million by 1977, and their spread causes concern not only to he Soviet authorities, but also the the Orthodox Church as well. One priest said very sadly to me , "By the year two thousand the Ukraine will be a Baptist Country" and he said it would be a Baptist country because of the energy and the courage shown by the Baptists in publishing literature, in founding new groups and because the Baptists had a more, and this is his words, the words of an Orthodox Priest, had "a more portable religion" It was very much less easy to put pressure on them .They did not have shrines and great churches, and elaborate liturgies. If there was too much pressure on them, they disappeared in to what is called "the cathedral of the forest". They are extremely difficult to control.

Divided, in the Ukraine, into registered and unregistered Baptists, the unregistered Baptists believe, with Lenin, that there should be no connection at all between Church and State. This division within the Baptists has a comparatively recent origin. It originated in the '60s, it ocurred as a response to the renewed pressure on the Church leadership exerted during Kruschevs period of leadership, and during his anti-religious campaign. The unregistered Baptists, as with so many Christians before them , [I mean the Donatists Schism in the North African church, had a similar origin] resented the extent to which some leaders were prepared to compromise with the new deamnds being made by the authorities, and so cut themselves off from all connections with the State. These 'Reform' Baptists, as they are often called, have succeeded in converting numbers of very young people. When asked "What do you find when you become a member of the Baptist Church?" young people will sometimes tell you -" You do not really understand the pressures of life in this society. A Baptist Church represents to us a place where you can be open. It is a true community. It is a place of truth and integrity. In our circumstances you would simply not understand how powerful this sort of witness is".

Mr Gorbachev made a very fascinating comment on the spiritual state of some

Soviet citizens. He said: 'A man who has a dual consciousness finds life and work difficult. He loses direction and no longer has the strength for transformation'. This dual consciousness, this realisation that you have to have an official persona and make the approved comments is actually rather different from the private life, which many people lead with their intimates. This dual consciousness, to which Mr Gorbachev refers exerts a very great pressure on individuals. Sometimes when they come into contact with one of these Baptist communities, they come into contact with a true community which they can embrace with immense relief.

I also want to mention briefly the religious renaissance which many people have detected among the more youthful urban intellectuals, and this time even in cities like Leningrad and Moscow. I do not know whether you have seen a most remarkable book by Tatiana Garicheva called 'Talking about God is dangerous'. It is an account of her conversion whilst living in Leningrad. She was a brilliant student a very gifted person, though she now lives in exile. She describes a conversation with a member of the KGB, and what the KGB interrogator says illustrates a great deal about the state of mind of the authorities as they are faced with the evidence of religious revival, particularly among the gifted and the young. It is, frankly, bewildered. The interrogator says to her:

'Where did you, get such belief in God from? You were brought up in an ordinary Soviet family. Your parents are intelligent people, they are atheists. You have no local roots in the faith, you have no social roots in the faith. You do not come from the nobility or from the Kulacks, [the rich peasants], and our society as a whole cannot produce any religious beliefs, since there is atheist propaganda everywhere. No one believes in fairy stories any more. Why do you believe this nonsense, University people like you, like any old woman who cannot read or write?'

There is a great deal of surprise and bewilderment that people like Tatiana are being converted. Of course, I think that the progress, and the success of the religious renaissance among the urban intellectuals should not be exaggerated. The view that has just been put into the mouth of this KGB interrogator is very widespread. You can see its strength, it has echoes in the common view of many people in this country. We no longer believe in fairy stories, and although attitudes to religion may be less hostile and more whistful, much of what is put into the mouth of that KGB interrogator could be applied to many many people in this country. Now a very fascinating answer to these questions is given. Tatiana an energetic person, very gifted, became sickened with what she sensed as the anomie, the emptiness of life in her school and in her family. She was searching for something more, and she actually took up Yoga. Yoga, one discovers, is quite often the way into more pronounced religious convictions. In her Yoga text book she discovered that the Lord's Prayer, the Prayer taught by Jesus Christ, was printed as a Mantra - to be repeated and used as a concentration exercise. As she repeated this prayer, so she had an overwhelming spiritual experience, which deeply impressed her. She felt that she was being seized by the Spirit. Thereafter, knowing very little about classical Christianity, remarkably ignorant about it, with very little access to classic religious texts, she describes how her faith was nourished. The faith that she had, and also quite a lot of members of her circle, young intellectuals in Leningrad in the '70s. She describes, for example, the enormous importance for her, and for so many of the new converts, of the Stazzi the elders, those spiritual fathers, often monks, and the search for a spiritual father among them. She describes a most fascinating

visit that she made to the surviving cave monastery of the Transfiguration of Christ which is near Rega in the Baltic Republic. It is very interesting, that one of the proposals for the Millennium next year, the celebration of the one thousand years of Christianity in Russia, is a proposal that the elders of the famous monastery of Optina, which Dostoyeski writes about in Brothers Karazamov, should be canonised. It is also very interesting to hear a well supported rumour that their canonization is being contested by the secular religious authorities because they are only too well aware of the immense significance of the Starszi in contemporary religious life. Now Tatiana became a member of a seminar which brought together a lot of young intellectuals in Leningrad, to try and do something to remedy their ignorance of Christianity. She has some very moving things to say about the questions discussed in that seminar, which was paralleled by another seminar of young intellectuals in Moscow, most of whose members were eventually arrested. Finally, she says:

'In my circle in the 1970's in Leningrad, being a Christian and being cultured and cultivated, were thought to amount to virtually the same thing.'

Now to hear somebody say that, if you know anything about the relations between the intelligencia and the church in the 19th century, is totally astonishing. The title of her book 'Talking about God is dangerous' is double edged. It is not only obviously dangerous as far as she is concerned in the Soviet Union. It is dangerous in the west, because talk about God here, is too cheap and too easy, and she has been shocked by the torpor and the tepidity of religious life that she has found in Western Europe, and particularly shocked by the lack of what she calls 'true clergy'.

The measure of morality in the Soviet system, the measure of what is good and bad, must be what serves the interests, the health and the vigour of the State. Clearly loyalty to God, proclaimed above loyalty to the State, and any preservation of private canons of moral judgement are considered as subversive. To some people religious convictions are as bad as drinking. There is another campaign to try and improve the quality of Soviet life. But the Church of Martyrs, the Church, so many of whose members, and I am not referring to one particular Church, but to all the Churches in the Soviet Union, the Church that has produced so many martyrs over the last decades, has an extraordinary moral authority, I think totally beyond our comprehension here. A moral authority which comes out in the prayer of a Baptist leader as he began his ministry once again before his community at Karpov in the Ukraine, a pastor returning from the camps, who prayed at the beginning of his first sermon: "Lord make me worthy to suffer for you, give me strength to remain steadfast when I think of those who have failed because of suffering, and have bypassed Golgatha, because they loved the world. I forgive those who have treated me cruelly, or who will treat me cruelly, because they do not know what they are doing".

Now the Church of such people has enormous moral authority. So, how do you deal with this situation. Well, if you have ever been to Leningrad, I hope that you have visited the fascinating Museum of Atheism. It is a Museum to be found in the Cathedral, the sometime Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazahn, where General Katoozev, who is one of the great heroes of the Russian resistance to Napoleon, is buried. This great Museum of Atheism was opened in 1932. Watching the exhibits in the Museum change, gives you some clue about how atheist policy is evolving to meet the new religious challenge. When I first visited the Museum of Atheism in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazhan,

in the '70s, the exhibits were vivid, they reminded me somewhat of the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's. There was the inquisitor, there was the torture chamber, the very worse aspects of religion, and there have been some appalling aspects of religion throughout the centuries, the very worst aspects of religion on show and on display, with some rather crude messages. A picture of some Baptists baptising someone in a river with the message underneath: WARNING, total immersion baptism can damage your health.

In the '80s, faced with the sophistication of the Leningrad seminar and other manifestations of a much more sophisticated revival, you notice that the tone and the kind of exhibits in the Museum of Atheism, change very considerably. The Museum if you visit it today is a much more subtle affair. Much more low-key. It is an evolutionary approach in a rather Olympian manner, seeking to stress, that whereas religion might have had some positive features at some point in history, it has now been overtaken by new understanding, new scientific world views. So it is organised on an evolutionary, much more lofty scientific plane. It is not so crudely propagandistic, although, I do urge you, that if you do go and visit this museum in Leningrad, do not miss the section devoted to the foreign links of the Russian Orthodox Church. There you will see the most remarkable photograph of Archbishop Ramsey on a visit to Zargorss. Archbishop Ramsey who, as you know one of the most "Sheep may safely graze" gentle and meek pastors you could possibly imagine, has been caught in a rather uncharacteristic moment in this photograph, with his Caterbury cap at a villainous angle, he has somehow seized a pastoral cross from his chaplain, which he appears to be just about to wade into the photographers and into the crowd, crashing left and right. It is a marvellous photograph, and it is so totally uncharacteristic of the man that it is very amusing. So do not miss that if you go to the Museum of Atheism.

But despite this lofty, more scientific approach, the passion that characterises quite a lot of atheist work is not absent. There is passion in atheist work. It is not just the mere negation of God, atheism is seen as a much more healthy and decent and moral world view. Some of the passion is caught rather amusingly in that marvellous book 'The Yawning Heights' in which Zinoiev's Party Secretary says: "We are often asked whether God exists? And we answer this question in the affirmative. Yes, God does not exist". If you catch the Russian joke there, it is a tribute to some of the passion that does still remain in atheist propaganda.

There was a fascinating article, reported only this month, which comes from Georgia. It actually comes from the pen of Professor David Gegischiviev who is the head of the Faculty of Scientific Communism and Atheism in the Tebllis State Medical Institute. This this is a very fascinating article, because by implication it admits to considerable shortcomings in atheist work. It makes the point that I have just made, that atheism as a mere negation of God, rather than something positive, is just a scarecrow, and is not respectable. But it goes on to make some very interesting points. It says atheist propaganda is not assisted by absurd doctrines, which every one can see through. For example "The denial of the clear role of the Georgian Church in the formation of a unified feudal state in Georgia, and in the spread of literacy and in the translation of literature and so on, the denial that this has happened, has had a negative effect on the credibility of scientific atheist propaganda, because it was undoubtedly a distortion of historical reality." So he is saying that much atheist propaganda in the past has really refused to attribute anything positive to religious faith. This

has been so incredible to people that it has damaged the credibility of the whole atheist effort. he quotes with approval Gorbachev's statement: 'You cannot adjust old formulas to present day processes'.

Then he goes on to another problem. A problem which any serious atheist propagandist looking at those young people in the Ukraine, and looking at those University graduates in Leningrad, is going to ask. Today's believers were born and grew up in a socialist system, and have been educated in Soviet Schools, so where has it all gone wrong? This is a question which the professor believes that atheist propagandists have to answer, and he says, 'We should be less cynical about the willingness of believers to take a positive part in the building up of a communist society. We should be more prepared to co-operate with them. Also we must change our techniques. There must be more dialogue with religious believers, individually. We must stop just relying on crude things like that poster we often put up to advertise atheist lectures (often, I should think so, 35,000 of them in one year was delivered in one republic alone). That poster we often put up to advertise atheistic lectures entitled 'The reactionary essence of religious teaching', which was just an insult and so counterproductive. In restructuring, the professor concludes, we really do need to reject methods that have been rejected by life.

Now that is a fascinating essay by someone in the atheist establishment, pointing to a considerable change in attitudes towards religious believers, and the phenomenon of religion, which you can also see in the changes in the Museum of Atheism. They may point at the moment to some more rather relaxed future for religious believers. The notable dissident priest, who came into prominence at the end of the '60s beginning of the '70s, Father Gledylyklunine has just been released from Labour Camp and is now working again in the Diocese of Krutiski and Colomnar, is on record as welcoming and believing in these hopeful signs for religious belief in the Soviet Union. He says: " I do not believe that Gorbachev is actively anti-religious in the way that his predecessors were, he has got other things to worry about". Father Gled has pointed to a very significant sign for the suspension of an insistence that those who are having their children to be baptised in churches in Moscow and Leningrad, should at the same time that they are having their children baptised, deposit their passports in the sacristy. Because what happened was, unless you had an understanding with the priest and you got round it, was that your details were sent into the local religious affairs bureau. This requirement for passports to be deposited in the Sacristy has been dropped in Moscow and Leningrad, and Father Gladd thinks that that is a very hopeful sign indeed.

There are more hopeful signs when you look at the circle of people surrounding Gorbachev. An admirer of his, somebody I came to know quite well, a communist from a leading family, says this about the attitudes of many people in the communist establishment who surround Mr. Gorbachev; 'Like them, I am not a militant atheist, it is just that God had not been a question in my family for three generations'. He characterized the prevailing attitude in this group, as a cultured attitude, of people who were certainly not believers, but were intrigued by the church. They were intrigued by its art, they were intrigued by its history at a time when there is a great search for roots in the Soviet Union, in all cultures, and not least in the Russian culture. So Gorbachev, not perhaps a cultured despiser, but somebody who may, on his days off, be quite intrigued and interested by the phenomenon of

religion, but it clearly is not his first concern.

A most fascinating rumour reached the West about events at Orthodox Easter this year. A usually reliable source reported that Moscow TV and Radio had made the decision for the first time, this Easter, to broadcast 15 minutes of the orthodox Easter Midnight service. Mr Gorbachev was apparently consulted and saw no objections, Mr Ligatchev, who is in charge of ideology, another senior member of the Party leadership, personally 'phoned Moscow TV only minutes before the broadcast, banning it. Now who is going to win in this struggle, this debate? There is debate going on, it is not a monolithic country. Russians are immensely literary and intelligent. There is a most lively debate going on in every aspect of Soviet life at the moment. Nobody is clear who is going to win this particular debate. Events during the year when the millennium of Christianity in the Soviet Union is celebrated, will give us a crucial insight into what is happening.

Now, the leadership of the main Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, is distracted by the ambiguity of the struggle that is going on. They do not know which way it is going yet. They are exceedingly cautious. I had an opportunity recently to talk to one Heirach, and he was very unwilling to hail 'Glasnost' as unqualified good news. He had learnt not to stick his neck out. People who come out into the open too quickly risk what happened to those little flowers that emerged during the Prague Spring, which were very rapidly frosted.

So there is immense caution there about what is happening, and an unwillingness to predict. This attitude is criticised very fiercely by younger priests, younger leaders in the other Churches. There is a generation gap here, and the younger leaders in the Orthodox and other Churches say that the leadership, the top people, are missing opportunity after opportunity, just at the present, to improve the position for religious believers of all kinds in the Soviet Union.

So there is a debate within the ruling party between people who take a more relaxed attitude and any way are perhaps even grateful that the Russian Orthodox Church, unlike the Church in Poland, does not have great international links, and is patriotic to a fault, and those who still take a rather more hard line passionate atheist stance. In the Churches as well, there is this uncertainty about how things are going to go, about how far you can push, about what the opportunities really are at present. So just to sum up, as we are on the eve of celebrating the Millennium, the one thousand years of Christianity in Russia, we need to watch these signs. We need to see whether the warnings of that Professor of Scientific Atheism from Georgia, have been heeded. We need to see whether the scholarly Soviet accounts of the events a thousand years ago, present the contribution of the Church to Russian society in a positive or negative way. We need to look at that. It is an extremely important guide. We need to see what sort of involvement the state is prepared to have in the celebrations. We need to see whether the rumours of the return of four monasteries (remembering the crucial significance of monks and nuns and monasticism for the health of the majority Church, an importance underlined by the writings of people like Tatiana Goricheva) are in fact put into effect. We need to watch what happens at the Local Councils. We need to watch for the implications of who gets canonised, because of course, one of the proposals for celebrating the Millennium is that there should be new Saints recognised and canonised, and who are they?

That will tell us a great deal about the balance of power between Church and State, who is in the ascendant. The candidates at the moment, seem to be two 19th century figures, of outstanding spiritual eminence, Bishop Fayerfand the Recluse, and Ignati Brianchaninev, and they appear to have support both in Church and State. There are other candidates however, more controversial, I have already referred to the Elders, the Startzi, of the Monastery which gave Dolstoyeski his inspiration for his picture of the Elder Zorzzima in Brothers Karimazev. There seems to be a proposal from the secular arm, that a Father Kostelnik, who played a very considerable part in the post-war return of the Uniats of the Ukraine into the Orthodox fold, who was assassinated fairly soon after the crucial Congress which wrought this amalgamation will be canonised as well.

So those are the things we need to watch for. There are plenty of objective signs, and I hope that in this necessarily brief series of talks, one or two points have emerged that might enable us to read those signs aright.