

# ORTHODOX ENGLAND

*In this issue:*

A Parable of Two Civilizations  
From Roman Orthodoxy to the  
Orthodoxy of the Isles  
The Saints of England  
Charlemagne, Father of 'Europe'?  
A Story of St Nicholas

*and much more . . .*

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## Editorial: A PARABLE OF TWO CIVILIZATIONS

### The Civilization of the Spirit

HERE was once a great Empire. Outside its splendid Capital there were many lands and peoples, provincial cities, ports and towns, villages with meadows and fields, woods and forests, streams and rivers, hills and mountains. Here men built homes of wood or stone with their wives and children, and there were small towns with markets to trade in, villages and, above all, churches and monasteries to pray in.

Many had a knowledge of various useful skills, how to grow grain with good yields; how to make wholesome food; how to bring clean water in pipes to wash and drink and water the crops; how to weave good and fine clothes from different materials; how to take dirty water away and dispose of waste wisely, how to make roads and bridges; how to build watermills and windmills to make natural energy, how to make useful metal tools and build boats and ships. They knew about geography, history and philosophy; how to speak different languages; how to read and write; to paint and make music, how to make medicine from herbs and plants and build hospitals and orphanages; how to make fortifications to protect themselves against enemies who did not share their Faith, and, above all, how to build beautiful churches of wood and stone.

However, there were some things that most people of this Empire did not want to know, because mostly they were more interested in spiritual things than in material things, more interested in wisdom than in knowledge. As a result, most people here were poor though they worked hard, they were simple, but hospitable and strong in their Faith. They lived in families and their children were very important to them. In a word, their civilization was organic and natural. Human values were much more important than technical values. They refused to develop knowledge of unnecessary material things, called science, for they knew that this was inorganic and unnatural and could have evil and destructive consequences.

We call this Empire of Water, Grain, Cloth, Wood, Stone and Wisdom the Civilization of the Spirit; and its watchword is: 'I pray, therefore I am'.

However, there was a remote part of this Empire which was backward and did not possess all the wisdom of the rest of the Civilization of the Spirit. After nearly a thousand years, its ruler grew tired of living in such a simple way and wanted to possess knowledge of material things. He thought: 'We are tired of meadows and fields, woods and forests, streams and rivers, hills and mountains. We shall build on the meadows and fields, chop down the woods and forests, abandon the hills and mountains and dam the streams and rivers. We shall build castles to control these lands and destroy all the old churches and monasteries, because they are too humble. We shall rebuild them as great buildings in our own way, so great that they will reach up to the heavens.

Then we shall be great like gods. Through knowledge of material things, with our own knowledge, we shall make our own Empire and be greater and more glorious than those of the Empire of the Spirit. We shall take thought and our watchword will be: 'I think, therefore I am'. For this jealous ruler and those who came after him wanted not the wisdom of those of the Civilization of the Spirit, but knowledge of material things, for they imagined that knowledge would give them power, making them great and glorious.

### The Civilization of Matter

So in those regions they began to experiment with material things, observing them, analysing them, dissecting them and dividing them, developing their knowledge, discovering the new techniques that those in the Civilization of the Spirit had not wanted to know, because they led to evil and destruction. With their new knowledge, those in the new Empire became arrogant and began to mock those in the Civilization of the Spirit, accusing them of changing their beliefs and calling them backward. And as they had grown cunning through all their new discoveries, they sent an army, seemingly to fight for the Civilization of the Spirit against their enemies, but actually to destroy them.

Thus, in their pride and arrogance they laid waste the great Capital of the Civilization of the Spirit, making great slaughter and devastating many of their towns, churches and monasteries.

However, they could not lay waste the Faith of the Civilization of the Spirit, because it was not composed of material things. Therefore, the Civilization of the Spirit built a new Capital to the north, where the Empire took refuge. Even here, they were attacked again and again by more invaders from the new Empire. Nevertheless, the Civilization of the Spirit defeated those armies and for a time it grew strong again, calling the world to join it.

Obsessed with material things, the new Empire continued to examine the substance of things and the rules that govern all materials. They continued with their incessant wars, massacring all those who opposed their transformations, all who strove to conserve the Tradition inherited from the first thousand years. This included, first of all, their own people, those who remembered how things had been and had not wanted the transformations that had cut them off from the Civilization of the Spirit, but it included especially all those outside this new Empire, all those who resisted conquest by it.

So the new Empire chopped down many trees, found out how to dig ever more materials from the ground and how, through mixing them and burning them, to make great quantities of iron and forge ever harder materials. So, they devised great industries and metal constructions, and huge factories, pouring out black smoke and poisonous fumes, appeared. Then they began mixing more and more materials together and making new substances that no man had ever seen before. Then they began doing the opposite, splitting materials, destroying the very building blocks of all matter, making huge explosions. Finally, they broke down matter into tiny impulses and codes, which sent information all over their Empire.

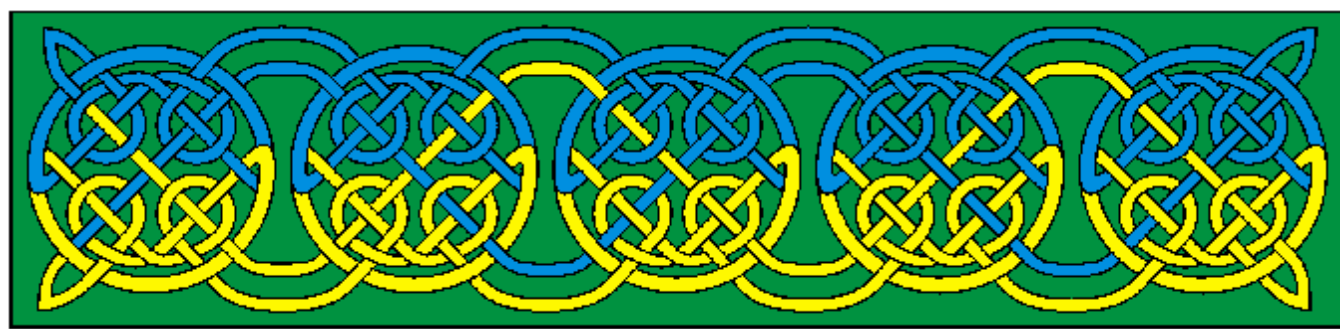
Thus, for over a thousand years most people of this new Empire developed their knowledge and made many new things that they consumed in

great quantities. This was because mostly they were more interested in material things than in spiritual things, more interested in knowledge than in wisdom. As a result, most people there grew weak in their Faith. Their families split apart, like the materials that they had also split apart, destroying the building blocks of society. Since children were not very important to them, some of them even stopped having children altogether. Their Empire was inorganic and unnatural, for they had developed knowledge that had destructive and evil consequences. Clouds of steam and soot and toxins went up into the skies and poisoned the land and the waters and the food and many people fell ill.

We call this Empire of Machine, Factory, Plastic, Atom, Electron and Knowledge the Civilization of Matter. And its watchword is: 'I consume, therefore I am'.

Centuries ago the Civilization of Matter began to spread its Empire all over the world. Some accepted it of their own will, on others it was imposed. It spread also to the Civilization of the Spirit, where they even moved their Capital to be nearer to the Civilization of Matter. Indeed, there were those among its élite, who were so drawn by the temptations of the knowledge of the Civilization of Matter that they revolted against the Spirit and adopted Matter.

It seemed for a time as if the Spirit would altogether disappear and as if Matter had triumphed. But the Spirit fought back and Matter retreated for a time. And although we know that Matter will be victorious again, we also know that at the end of time the Civilization of Matter will destroy itself and that the Civilization of the Spirit will vanquish all its enemies. Therefore we do not fear those who revolt against our Civilization and appear to be victorious. For Matter is mortal, but the Spirit is immortal and Victory is ours.



## From the Righteous: BYRTHFERTH (MONK OF RAMSEY c. 1010)

### On the Number Seven

**S**EVEN are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as the Prophet Isaiah declares, and these seven gifts have only been fully seen in human nature in their unity in Jesus, 'of whose fullness we have each received grace poured upon grace'. For each saint has only received 'a pennyworth', in proportion to their capacity to contain the grace of the Holy Spirit

Abraham received the spirit of wisdom; Moses was endowed with the spirit of understanding.

Joshua was filled with the spirit of counsel, and David with the spirit of courage. The spirit of knowledge was revealed in Solomon, and the spirit of devotion in St Peter. In our own days, the spirit of the fear of the Lord was wonderfully manifest in St Oswald, our most notable archbishop of York.

In the natural world, the number seven starts from unity, that is from one, and extends itself with great symbolic meaning to the pinnacle of its perfection as a universal number.

## FROM ROMAN ORTHODOXY TO THE ORTHODOXY OF THE ISLES

### Introduction: AD 600: The Church that Disappeared.

**I**N the century and a half since the last recorded British appeal for aid to the Patrician Aëtius in Gaul in 446/7, the Church in eastern and central Britain seems almost to have disappeared. What had happened to Roman Orthodoxy in Britain? Why did Abbot Augustine and his forty monks, landing in England in 597, find so few traces of Christianity in south-eastern England, especially in the kingdom ruled by King Ethelbert in Kent?<sup>1</sup>

With the notable exception of the shrine of St Alban on the hill above *Verulamium*, no trace of a Church remained in the parts of Britain ruled by the pagan English. There were no bishoprics, not even London or York, now pagan; no churches, except ruins; no parishes and no monasteries, unlike in Gaul, just a score of miles away across the Channel. On the other hand, St Augustine knew of bishops far to the West. Where had they come from? And why did no representative of this mysterious British Church come to greet St Augustine, when he landed with his monks on Thanet? What are the answers to this and all the above questions?

### Until AD 400: Roman Orthodoxy in Britain.

The written evidence for Orthodoxy in Britain in the first three centuries is not large. There seems little doubt, as per Tertullian and Origen, that there

were already Christians in Britain by the second century and, if we believe the traditions of the East, Christianity in Britain had apostolic origins in the first century<sup>2</sup>. However, the earliest local references date to about 300 and even they are reported in the eighth century by St Bede.

Famously, the Venerable Bede gives us the account of the martyrdom of St Alban and the martyrdom of Sts Julius and Aaron at Caerleon. This settlement was attached to a legionary fortress and must have contained Christians, for soldiers and merchants from the eastern provinces would be among the most likely bearers of the new eastern faith to the West. It is notable that Aaron is a Jewish name, suggesting that he may have been a Jewish merchant who had adopted Orthodoxy and both Julius and Alban are Latin, not Celtic, names. Whether any of these martyrdoms took place in the early third century, during the Decian persecution of 250-251, or during the Diocletian persecution of 303-305 is uncertain, though many academics prefer the earlier date. According to St Gildas (c. 500 – c. 570) there were 'other martyrs of both sexes in various places'.

Nevertheless, some ten years after the end of persecution in the West, the Church in Britain had dioceses and bishops. It was represented by three bishops at the Council of Arles on 1 August 314. This was the first major Council of all the Western provinces and was called by the Emperor St Constantine. It was initially to settle the dispute between Cæcilian, Bishop of Carthage and his

Donatist opponents. However, the Council turned to other business, such as the date of Easter and the sacramental authority of the diaconate. Britain was represented by three bishops from London, York and Lincoln (or Colchester), a priest and a deacon. How many bishops and dioceses there were altogether in Britain at the time is a matter of speculation. Various figures have been put forward, with probable sees in London, Cirencester, Lincoln, York and Carlisle and possible sees in any of Canterbury, Rochester, Winchester, Colchester, St Albans, Dorchester (Oxon), Silchester, Gloucester, Bath, Exeter, Caerwent, Wroxeter, Chester and Catterick.

What does seem more certain is that Orthodoxy in Roman Britain was concentrated in certain regions. These were notably centred around: the Thames estuary (as far as the Chilterns, St Albans, Colchester, Rochester and Canterbury); the Severn estuary, as far as Ilchester and including the rich villas around Bath, Cirencester, Gloucester and in south Wales; the east Midlands – an area of rural villas; the Chester-Wroxeter area; the York–Leeds area; the area around Hadrian's Wall, including Carlisle. Significantly, the only area not to be affected by the later pagan English ('Saxon') invasions was south Wales and it would come to play a key, Christianizing role in later times.

In the fourth century the Church in Britain followed its Gallic neighbour in siding with St Athanasius against Arius. Moreover, in 343 British bishops joined with others at the Council of *Sardica* (that is Sofia in Bulgaria) in his support. Writing from exile in Phrygia in 358, St Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, also numbered British bishops among St Athanasius' friends. On the other hand, in 360, three British bishops (so poor that they were financed from imperial funds) took part in a Council of four hundred bishops, called by the Emperor Constantius at *Ariminum* (Rimini) in Italy. There, confined to one of the large churches in the town, the bishops gave way to pressure and assented to a heretical creed that denied Christ's consubstantiality with the Father. Later, in about 396, Victricius, the pro-monastic Bishop of Rouen came to Britain to help at a Council of British bishops who had disagreed about a disciplinary matter, possibly connected with the veneration of the martyrs and their relics. The suggestion in all this is that in Church matters Britain received help from elsewhere in Europe.

Nevertheless, archaeology proves that Christian communities were active in Britain throughout the

fourth century. One of these communities was in *Durobrivæ* (Water Newton) in Huntingdonshire. A hoard of gold and silver objects was discovered here with an altar set. The main finds were a beautiful two-handled silver chalice, a large silver paten, the remains of a silver hanging lamp, several bowls, a strainer and nineteen silver leaves, some stamped with a chi-rho. We find similar evidence from a number of villas in south-central Britain. For example, at Hinton St Mary in Dorset, the central figure on the mosaic in the largest room is a bust of a very Roman-looking Christ, standing in front of a chi-rho.

Two other villas not far from Hinton St Mary in Dorset have produced evidence for Christian owners in the middle of the fourth century. At Frampton a chi-rho formed the central feature of a mosaic at the entrance of a small apsed room. At nearby Fifehead Neville, two gold rings inscribed with a chi-rho tell of the faith of the owner. Christian rooms separated from the rest of the Romano-British house at Lullingstone in Kent are slightly later. Fragments of two chi-rho symbols were found as part of the decoration of the wall of the antechamber to the chapel. More spectacular were the remains of six standing figures in tunics, standing between pillars of a building which appears to have been a church. One of these figures standing at the end of the line on the right has a hand raised, as if giving a blessing. These would seem to be either clergy or apostles, if the latter, survivors from a series of twelve.

#### AD 400–450: Sub-Roman Orthodoxy. The Collapse of the Empire but the Renewal of the Church.

Historically, the consequences of the combined barbarian attacks of Picts, Irish and Saxons in 367–369 had been a heavy blow against the advance of Christianity in late Roman Britain. In 401 Roman troops were withdrawn, in 409 the British were told by Rome to defend themselves and in 410 Rome was sacked. And yet in Church affairs, this was by no means necessarily a period of decline. We know of the existence of several churchmen at this time. There was the pretender to the Empire in the West, Marcus (408) and Bishop Fastidius, who wrote between 420 and 430, referred to by the late fifth-century writer, Gennadius of Marseilles. Christians with considerable wealth remained in Britain in the early fifth century. There are also traces of Christian buildings, at Icklingham in Suffolk and Uley in



Gloucestershire. Finds also suggest Christian buildings in Wroxeter (*Viroconium*) and Lincoln.

However, this continuity, although weakened, is not the main part of our story. The main part of our story is new influence from overseas. As we have seen, the fourth century already shows the Church in Britain subordinate to the Church in Gaul and this became ever more the case in the fifth century. By then pilgrims from Britain had begun bringing back from Gaul new monastic currents, which had arrived there from the monks of Egypt, Syria and Palestine in the fourth century. These ascetic and popular influences spread northwards to Tours, where already in about 372 they had resulted in the foundation of St Martin's monastery near Tours. Quite possibly some of the pilgrims from Britain became disciples of St Martin († 397). In the south of Gaul, these influences took root under Church Fathers such as St John Cassian († 435) and St Vincent of Lerins († 450). The former had lived with the monks of Egypt between c. 385 and 399 and brought Egyptian, so-called Pachomian, monasticism with him to the south of Gaul.

The first of the British pilgrims who returned from the Continent was the future St Ninian (correctly, Nynia) (c. 380 – c. 450). He may have met Bishop Victricius of Rouen, though most believe that he certainly visited Rome or just possibly St Martin's Tours. In any case, he returned to Britain north of Hadrian's Wall and undertook a mission in south-west Scotland in c. 410, working under the new monastic influence. The white 'stone church' which St Ninian built at Whithorn, inland from the south-eastern point of Wigtonshire and later dedicated to St Martin, was recorded by St Bede as having been built 'a long time before'. Called 'The Apostle of the Southern Picts', St Ninian was indeed the Apostle of what is now the Scottish Lowlands. This is the region between the Antonine Wall and Hadrian's Wall, which includes Glasgow and Edinburgh.

St Ninian brought from Gaul a renewed spiritual vigour and there is no doubt that he inspired many others all over northern Britain, Wales and Ireland for many decades to come, despite later lapses among the Picts. Thus, among many others, St Patrick († c. 461) may have been directly influenced by Whithorn. He seems to have come from the area on the Wall and that his brother-in-law's name is recorded as Martin. Certainly, the Irish St Enda († c. 530) trained at the monastic seedbed founded by St Ninian and became the first founder of Irish monasticism. And St Enda was to

have a great many disciples, directly and indirectly, among them the great saints, St Finnian of Moville in Ireland († 579) and St Kentigern in southern Scotland († 612).

It was during this period of Roman cultural decadence that by the 420s some in sub-Roman Britain had espoused the typically pagan Roman humanist and anti-monastic teaching of an aristocratic intellectual, the Romano-Briton Pelagius (born c. 375). His teaching had begun to thrive in Rome, where Pelagius preached, from the early fifth century, and later in Carthage, under Pelagius' zealous disciple Celestius. Interestingly and providentially, it was two gifted bishops from Gaul, St Germanus of Auxerre and St Lupus of Troyes, who led the Orthodox response to the spread of this heresy, visiting Britain in 429.

St Germanus, who had made Auxerre the spiritual centre of northern Gaul with Tours, returned to Britain in c. 447, together with St Severus of Trier, to combat the heresy again. Here St Germanus made a disciple in St Illtud of Wales († 530), the founder of Welsh monasticism, who was to play a similar role in Wales to that played by St Enda in Ireland. Through him were influenced St Cadoc († 560) and the Latin-named St Dubricius (Dyfrig) († 546), St Paternus († 550) and St Paulinus († 573), as well as St Gildas (born c. 500), St David (born c. 500), who also learned the monastic life from the Latin-named St Justinian († 540) and St Paulinus, St Teilo († 560), St Deiniol († 584) and a thebaid of Welsh monks, who lived according to the example of the Egyptian monks.

In the context of Wales, we should not overlook the first early fifth-century mission to the south-east of Ireland, probably prepared from Wales. Traditionally, this included the bishops St Declan († c. 450) of Ardmore, who may have studied in Gaul, St Ibar (c. 450) and his nephew St Abban († c. 470), St Kieran of Saighir († c. 530, 'the first-born of the saints of Ireland') and St Ailbe († 527), who made disciples in Non-Roman Ireland. However, we should not overlook another Gallic-inspired mission to Ireland, that of St Palladius, probably also from Auxerre, who was sent by the Papacy to the south-east of Ireland in 431. Nevertheless, Ireland will always look to St Patrick as its chief apostle.

By the 430s, the Orthodox Romano-British family of St Patrick (c. 390 – c. 461?) (Patrick being the purely Roman name '*Patricius*', whence 'Patrician') had been living in the northwest of Britain for three generations. His grandfather had

been a priest and his father a deacon and also Roman official. Patrick too was inspired by spiritual renewal from Gaul. Although his name has been connected with the Egyptian monasticism of Lerins and St Martin's monastery outside Tours, it is almost certain that St Patrick was also inspired and taught by St Germanus of Auxerre.

It was the mission of St Patrick, who among many others baptized St Brigid of Kildare († c. 525), that proved the turning point in Ireland. Within a century of his repose Ireland had been completely conquered by the cross of Christ and became a spiritual beacon in Western Europe until the ninth century. However, we should note that Patrick, though British, went to work in Ireland, not in Britain. In Britain there still was no effective spiritual movement, such as the monasticism of Lerins, which provided the Church in Gaul with so many of its leaders during the Germanic invasions.

AD 450-500:

#### The Decline of Sub-Roman Orthodoxy

In the mid-fifth century in Britain many native Britons were still attached to Romano-Celtic religion and temples had continued to attract worshippers throughout the Roman period. As for surviving Orthodoxy, it was both urban and rural, existing in the remains of Roman towns and on estates, and was rather unevenly spread. It was

very much a minority religion, though stronger in southern Britain than in the north, except for in York and on Hadrian's Wall.

The overall impression for most of the Isles, except, as we have noted, for St Ninian's in southern Scotland, Wales and Ireland, is one of spiritual decline. This is proved by the decadent Pelagian heresy in the first decades of the fifth century, for, like all heresies, it stemmed from a lack of spiritual purity and therefore understanding. Indeed, after 446/7, the date of the British appeal for aid against barbarian attacks from Aëtius in Gaul and St Germanus' last visit in c. 447, written records ominously fell silent. The only military leader defending the west of Roman Britain we hear of is the Roman-named Ambrosius Aurelianus in about 450, who may possibly have left his name to Amesbury in Wiltshire.

On the other hand, the existence of several churches, such as that outside the southern walls at Colchester, at Silchester and possibly at Lincoln, and the 'garrison church' and baptismal font at Richborough has been confirmed at this time. Other probable churches have been found at Caerwent, Canterbury, Exeter and London. The evidence of churches is reinforced by that of cemeteries, as at Poundbury outside Dorchester and Lankhills outside Winchester. All these churches, except perhaps in Lincoln, were small, usually about 40' × 25'-30', some had apses. Thus,



*An artists reconstruction of a Romano-British church in Colchester*





*Part of a mosaic from Hinton-St-Mary, Dorset showing a representation of Christ in front of a Chi-Rho monogram*

they were clearly for small numbers. However, we cannot be sure at what point these churches fell out of use, before or after 450? In any case, it is thought that York may have been the very last bishopric in the whole of the eastern half of Britain, with its last bishop dying perhaps in the 470s, by which time all urban life had ceased in Britain.

It is clear that amid pagan attacks and the consequent collapse of urban life, Orthodoxy was in decline in most of Britain. Certainly, the sixth decade of the fourth century provides only isolated records of the existence of Orthodoxy in eastern Britain. Thus, a chapel existed at Lullingstone in Kent, but this was an estate church. Scattered across England, many place-names beginning with Eccles (from *ecclesia* = church) may also indicate the presence of Roman estate churches, abandoned at about this time and discovered with curiosity by the advancing pagan English.

In eastern Britain especially, there have been small finds of apparently abandoned objects. These include a possible candlestick, a small disc decorated with a chi-rho, finger rings, spoons with Christian symbols and other objects, all mainly from southern and eastern Britain. Lead tanks used for baptism confirms the modest survival of Orthodoxy. These are large vessels containing between 25 and 45 gallons of water. Over twenty

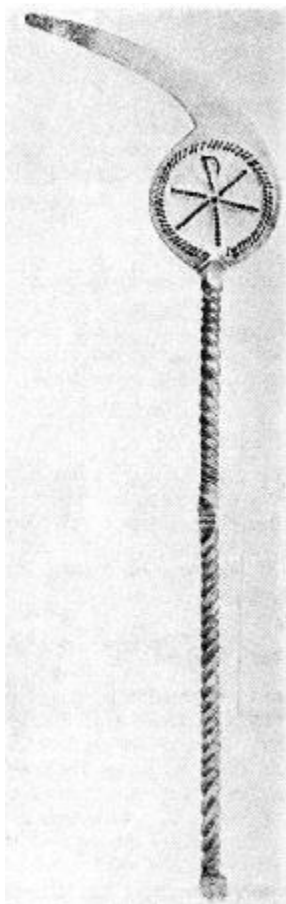
have been found so far, seven with the mid-fourth century plain chi-rho symbol.

This was the age when Gaul and other Western provinces were turning to Orthodoxy and the situation in Britain hardly stands comparison. Late Roman Britain has nothing to compare with the great Cathedral complex at Geneva (on the site of the present Russian Orthodox Cathedral), the churches at Arles and Narbonne in Gaul, Gallic estate churches and the seedbed of Gallic Orthodox monasticism in Lerins. Why had Sub-Roman Orthodoxy failed to follow the same route to triumph as the Church on the Continent? We can give two reasons for this. Firstly, there was the hostility of the new pagans, Picts, Scots and Saxons. Secondly, there was the departure of large numbers of Romans, fleeing the British periphery of the Empire, either towards the west or else emigrating across the sea, to Ireland, to Gaul and above all to Brittany.

Indeed, between about 450 and 550 huge numbers of the more Romanized and Christianized crossed the sea<sup>3</sup>, colonizing and evangelizing Armorica and giving it the name 'Brittany' and regions of it 'Cornwall' and 'Damnonia' (Devon). A British bishop with a Latin name, Mansuetus, is recorded as attending the Council of Tours in 461, another, Paternus, was consecrated Bishop of Vannes in 463. They would be followed by a multitude of missionary saints from Wales and Cornwall in the sixth century. Elsewhere in fifth-century Gaul, there was Faustus († c. 490), a Briton who became Abbot of Lerins in 433 and Bishop of Riez near Aix in 461. Before 475 he was



*A mural at Lullingstone Roman villa in Kent, showing the Chi-Rho monogram with the Alpha and Omega incorporated in it*



*An item bearing the chi-rho monogram, perhaps a 'spear', found together with other items of silver used in the Liturgy at Canterbury, Kent*

visited by another Briton, Riocatus, 'a bishop and monk'. Apart from Gaul, several other British refugees were recorded in Galician (Celtic) Spain, where a see of *Britonia* still existed as late as 900.

Why had none of the rich Romano-British Christian villa owners become bishops, like their counterparts in Gaul, or otherwise led their tenants towards Orthodoxy? The answer to this question may be in the indifference to Orthodoxy among the only slightly Romanized Celtic masses and the ethnic and social divide in late Roman Britain. Christianity was probably seen as an 'Imperial and villa Orthodoxy', the religion of the small Roman colonial urban and aristocratic Latin elite.

Christianity was not for the native people, still less for Non-Celtic and anti-Roman barbarians. For instance, the language of the Church in the West was Latin, but it is uncertain if many ordinary provincials in Britain spoke it at all. It would have been retained, in a rustic if artificial and academic form, only by the clergy. Notably, in Britain, Latin never developed into a Romance language, as it did in France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Romania. The rural population seems to have remained attached to a Celtic language with only a few borrowed Latin words that they had picked up.

After AD 500:

### Post-Roman Britain and the Thebaid of Native Saints

Thus, Romano-British refugees had left a Non-Christian and quite possibly relatively depopulated eastern Britain to the pagan English, made up mainly of Angles, Saxons and Jutes, who had crossed the North Sea during the fifth century. Some of the Britons who had remained may have died in skirmishes with the pagans, but most would have intermarried and been assimilated. According to St Gildas (✚ c. 570), writing in c. 542, even those who had gone west and north had then had to face territorial civil wars

These were waged by tribal 'tyrants' or leaders and were fought between the nominally Christian Celtic clans ('clan' being a word adopted from Latin). These wars were in addition to the pagan aggression from pagan Picts and Irish to the north and 'Saxons' elsewhere<sup>4</sup>. The defence of the Celtic west and perhaps north by one strong leader, *Dux Artorius* (Arthur), in about 500, only provided a delay until about 570. Afterwards came the inevitable late-sixth and early-seventh century takeover of all Britain by the westward-moving English, apart from the Cornish, Welsh and Scottish peninsulas. Here the pagan English made martyrs, for example, St Aldate (c. 577) and, at about the same time, St Tewdric (Theodore, ✚ 595), St Sidwell (*Sativola*), St Juthwara and St Urith.

The Orthodoxy the native people took with them to the West must often have been quite nominal, as records of the behaviour of British so-called Christians show, as denounced by St Patrick and St Gildas. Without bishops and therefore, sooner or later, without priests, Orthodoxy for at least some was little more than a nostalgic tradition. Yet, though submerged, Orthodoxy had not been extinguished. Remembered but not practised, the faith was waiting to be reinvigorated by those who themselves had providentially been reinvigorated from Gaul.

The spiritual renewal of post-Roman Britain was already in the air with the monastic currents that had been brought from Rome and especially Gaul throughout the fifth century. Archaeological finds suggest monasticism developing under influence from southern Gaul, Spain, North Africa and directly from Egypt, in little Romanized Cornwall, notably at Tintagel at the end of the fifth century, then in still Romano-British south Wales by about 500 and from there in Ireland. One good example





*A Celtic monks cell. Some Celtic 'monasteries' were more often a collection of hermits living together than a monastery in the modern sense of the word*

of this is St Finnian of Clonard (✚ c. 549), called 'The Teacher of the Irish Saints', who became a monk in Wales before returning to Ireland.

The emergence in barbarian-free Ireland and Wales of what can be called a thebaid of saints, shaped by monasticism from Gaul and Egypt, and crossing to Scotland from Ireland and to Cornwall and Brittany from Wales in c. 500-600, meant that a renewed Orthodoxy could flourish again in Western Britain. They provided a faith which was in no way linked with Roman colonialism and not menaced by Germanic barbarianism, as in Europe.

Thus, the results of the monastic seeds sown earlier by St Victricius, St Ninian, St Germanus, St Palladius and above all St Patrick, under influence from Gallic and Egyptian monasticism, blossomed in the full monasticism of the sixth century. Having received the faith from Romano-British tradition, renewed from Gaul and Egypt, the Irish and Welsh saints revived Orthodoxy in Britain. They transformed the vestigial Orthodoxy which Romano-British refugees had heroically managed to preserve. There was only partly continuity, above all it was transformation.

Thus, the first half of the sixth century saw the successful spread of monastic Orthodoxy in the Celtic West and also in the North. This was the age of the Irish and Welsh saints, who successfully renewed and transformed the submerged remnants of Roman Orthodoxy with their monasticism. Though Celtic, they were very much Roman and Latin and loyal to older traditions, such as the



*An aerial view of the ruins of an Irish monastery at Innismurray, Co. Sligo*

antiquated dating of Easter, prescribed by the Council of Arles in 314, but abandoned as inaccurate by the Roman Church in 455, and the old-fashioned form of tonsure. However, the Celts soon lost the Roman diocesan system and adapted to the Celtic tribal system. It was this which resulted in their tribal or territorial and not diocesan structures, with numbers of bishops in each tribal monastery, ruled over by an Abbot.

Even though many of the lives of these saints were completely lost, especially of those who crossed over to Cornwall and Brittany, even though many surviving lives were written in legendary form with folklore additions several centuries afterwards, they still relay the traditions of the Thebaid of Irish and Welsh monastics. The Irish richly repaid their debt for the Faith they had learned from the British St Ninian, St Patrick, Wales and Gaul. They loved travelling and founding monasteries on islands. Thus, they crossed to the Aran Islands (St Enda, ✚ c. 530), the Inner and Outer Hebrides (St Donan, ✚ 618, St Conan, ✚ 648, St Flannan of the Flannan Islands, ✚ c. 650), Iona (famously St Columba, ✚ 597 and his many disciples, who from there founded Lindisfame).

On Skye there was (St Maelrubba, Apostle of the Picts, ✚ c. 722, St Comgan, c. 750), Bute (St Machai, ✚ c. 480, St Cathan of Kingarth, ✚ c. 560 and his nephew St Blane, ✚ 585), on Mull (St Machar, ✚ c. 590, St Kenneth on Inch Kenneth, ✚ c. 600), on the Isle of Man (St Germanus, ✚ c. 475, St Machalus, ✚ c. 498, St Conan ✚ 648), on the Scottish mainland (helping to give the then name of Ireland, *Scotia*, to the whole country) (St Kessog, St Chattan, St Machan and St Machar of Aberdeen, ✚ c. 560, St Moluag, ✚ 592, St Mirin, ✚ c. 650, St Fergus, ✚ c. 725, St Kentigerna, ✚

c. 733), on the Orkneys (St Dotto, † 550, St Servan, † c. 550) and on the Faeroes (St Brendan the Navigator, † c. 575). All the island places in the far north with 'papa' in their names celebrate the hermitages of these Irish missionaries or their Scottish disciples.

The Welsh saints, on the other hand, moving westwards along Roman roads and towards the coasts, went to Anglesey, St Seiriol's Isle (Priestholm or Puffin Island), Church Island (Ynys Tysilio, St Tysilio, † 640) and Holyhead (Ynys Gybi) (St Dwynwen † 465, St Seiriol and St Cybi † c. 555, St Elaeth, † c. 570, St Gallgo, † c. 570, St Llibio, † 590, St Gwenfaen, † c. 600, St Midan, † c. 610, St Machud, † c. 630), Bardsey (St Cadfan, † 540), Ramsey Island (St Justinian, † 540, St Dubricius, † 546 and St Derfel, † 560), Barry (St Barruc † c. 600) and Caldey (St Dubricius, † 546 and St Samson, † 565).

They also crossed to Cornwall (Cornwall means the Welsh who live in the horn) (Sts Fingar and



A drawing from a mediaeval German MS showing St Brendan's boat. The vessel was moored up to a small island, which later turned out to be a whale. St Brendan is thought to have made the first crossing of the Atlantic

Phiala, † c. 455, St Piran, St Kew, St Morwenna and St Mabyn, † c. 500, St Endellion and St Keyne, † c. 505, St Clether, † 550), Devon (St Nectan, † 510, St Rumon and St Brannoc, † c. 525, St Petroc and St Austell, c. 564), Somerset (St Congar, † 520, St Carantoc, † c. 600, St Decuman, † c. 606) and the Isles of Scilly (St Lide, c. 620), then passed on to the Channel Isles (St Branwalader, † c. 560, St Maglorius of Sark, † 575) and Brittany (St Mawes, † c. 480, St Corentin, † c. 490, St Brioc, † c. 510, St Armel, † 552, St Tudy and St Tudwal † c. 560, St Samson, † 565, St Paulinus, † 573, St Budoc, † 585, St Mewan † 617, St Malo, † 640).

These monastic saints revitalized and transfigured the remnants of the colonial Roman 'Imperial and villa Orthodoxy', remembered by some Britons. The Irish and Welsh saints spread their faith all over the West, travelling from one part of this Celtic world to the other, exchanging their piety. Their monastic Orthodoxy was successful because it was acculturated, in other words, it was adapted to the local people, in a way which the foreign Roman 'Imperial and villa Orthodoxy' had not been. The Irish and Welsh had knowledge of Latin, they had knowledge of the faith and traditions of the fifth-century Roman Church and they had monasticism, brought from Egypt, either directly or usually indirectly, though Gaul. Thus, these saints alone could supply St Columba's mission from Ireland to Iona in 563 onwards and enable it to take a firm hold of western, northern and central Scotland and all the Western Isles and from Iona to Lindisfarne and northern England.

Moreover, this remarkable Irish monastic spirit would later spread abroad from Britain to Europe with St Fridolin († c. 540) in Germany, St Frigidian, Bishop of Lucca in Italy († 588), St Columban († 615) in Italy, St Gall († c. 630) in Switzerland, St Disibod († c. 680) and St Kilian († 689) in Germany, St Fursey († 650) and St Winnoc († 717) in northern France, St Catald († c. 720) in Italy and St Virgil († 784) in Austria. After the Viking attacks on Ireland in the ninth century and the end of the monastic movement, other Irish, now refugees, also settled in Europe, among them St Donatus († 876) in Italy and St Fintan († 879) in Germany, bringing light and learning to barbarian Western Europe until the close of the ninth century. Northwards and westwards, the Irish hermits were the first to settle the Shetlands, then the Faeroes, then Iceland soon after and, though it cannot be



proved, they perhaps lived and prayed in what is now North America, even before the arrival of Norwegians in about the Year 1000. Some believe that southwards and westwards they may also have reached the Azores and Brazil.

### Conclusion: After AD 600: The Church that Reappeared

Despite all this, it still fell to St Augustine and his monks to replant Orthodoxy in the Kingdom of Kent and the southeast of Britain. Welsh Christians, however revitalized, were still too antagonistic towards the English invaders to share with them 'their' faith, as St Bede records. The only notable trace of the former presence of Orthodoxy in the east was in the surviving veneration of the Protomartyr St Alban. The vestiges of Orthodoxy had physically left the east of Roman Britain and retreated into the fastnesses of the west, there to be revitalized from elsewhere, but not to return to the new 'England'. Nonetheless, the north of England was to be converted by Irish monks, notably St Aidan (✠ 651) and his followers, come from St Columba's Iona. It can be speculated that had it not been for St Augustine's mission, eventually all the English would have been converted by the Irish. It seems probable.

In any case, it would take the late seventh century, the Synod of Whitby in 663/4 and a Greek Archbishop of Canterbury, St Theodore of Tarsus (668–690), to bring English and Celt together, forming the Anglo-Celtic Insular Tradition. The finest example of this Anglo-Irish flowering was without doubt St Cuthbert, the Wonderworker of Britain (634–687). Interestingly, it is the spiritual influence of this Thebaid of Insular Saints, all of them monastic, St Ninian, St Patrick, St Illtud, St David, St Columba, St Augustine, St Aidan, St Theodore, St Cuthbert and many others, Roman, Celtic and English alike, which is being felt again in the Isles today. This is as it should be. Orthodoxy returns and has to be acculturated once more in the Britain of the twenty-first century in the face of the new barbarian onslaught of contemporary paganism.

We can conclude that a foreign, bourgeois, academic 'Imperial and villa Orthodoxy' does not take root. This is proved by the experiences of the sub-Roman period in Britain, as it is also confirmed by the experiences of the last fifty years and more in Britain. Only an authentic monastic Orthodoxy, an Orthodoxy therefore rooted in the saints and in particular in the local saints of these Isles, in the

Insular Tradition, and not the 'Imperial Orthodoxy' of ethnic groups from elsewhere, or the 'villa Orthodoxy' of Parisian philosophers, will bring forth fruit. A worldly, conformist, 'comfortable' Orthodoxy will not survive, it has to be transfigured and vivified by the authentic monastic Tradition in order to have spiritual significance.

In our own times, this is exactly what has happened to Greek Orthodoxy in the United States, brought there often as a nostalgic ethnic Hellenic cult, but now being revitalized by the authentic Athonite monasticism of Elder Ephraim and his seventeen monasteries and convents, set up in even fewer years. We declare that it will be the same in this country also. An Orthodoxy reduced to mere ethnic custom and property rights, brought here from elsewhere and rootless, will die out in the face of modern paganism. Orthodoxy must be rooted in the universal, authentic, spiritually-living Tradition of the Church of God, the Tradition of the Saints, or else it will not survive.

- 1 See 'A Threefold Cord' by Rev Barrie Williams in *Orthodox England* Vol 9 No 4. For details and maps see the academic but speculative studies by C. Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500*, Batsford, London 1981 and *The Age of Arthur: a History of the British Isles from 350 to 650* by J. R. Morris, London 1973. These studies are counterbalanced by the older but much more sober works of M. Deanesly, *The Pre-Conquest Church in England*, pp. 1–40, London 1961 and C. J. Godfrey, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 9–58, Cambridge 1962. Great care should be taken with studies of the 'Celtic Church'. The older ones, even up until the 1970s, e.g. L. Hardinge's *The Celtic Church in Britain* were written from an anachronistic, Protestant and anti-Roman Catholic viewpoint. They contain all sorts of historical nonsense, which makes the Celts into Protestants, 1,000 years before Protestantism had been devised! More recent studies, like those by Shirley Toulson, fall into neo-pagan New Ageism and are full of pantheistic sentimentality and the pagan nature-worship of the Green Movement.
- 2 For a summary of several non-local written sources see 'The Holy Apostles in Britain' in *Orthodox England* Vol 8 No 4.
- 3 See 'Brittonic and Early Celtic Christianity' (p. 26) in *Sidelights on the Anglo-Saxon Church* by M. Deanesly, London 1962.
- 4 For an imaginative reconstruction of this chaotic period as described in a fictional letter to the Emperor Justinian, see *Badon Parchments* by John Masefield, London 1947.

## THE SAINTS OF ENGLAND

### 1. Spring Blossoms

THE freshness of the saints of England is like a morning in early May. It is only to be expected of the first fruits and flowers of England's Christian faith. Such freshness characterizes the beginning of spiritual events generally, when eyes are bright and minds eager.

Thus, we are impressed by the brightness that accompanied the dawning of the Gospel, the age of love when flowered the Gospel according to St John. It was long the proud boast of the people of the north of England that Whitby, the foundation of the incomparable Hilda, was a perfect image in miniature of that early Orthodoxy, when there were neither class distinctions, nor rich and poor, but a community of goods and of interests. Such spring mornings, with the stirrings of new life and the new blossom in the sunshine, stare at the first shower of heavenly rain. We find such mornings, too, in the rise of Egyptian monasticism, carried first to Gaul and then to the Church in Ireland in St Patrick's day. These mornings do not last, they are broken by storms and violent thunderclaps, but we are thankful for them. They are the honeymoon of spiritual experience.

Few nations embraced the Christian Faith with more fervour and simplicity than the English. The obstinacy of their struggle to recover after terrifying lapses is a testimony to the strength of their new convictions. Oswald, for instance, whose veins were full of fiery pagan blood, grew into a heroic figure, with all the qualities that go into the making of perfect king. Oswald not only conquered the world and the enemies of Rome, but also his own self. In due course, the new Faith was to attain a position of splendour, to rise up and dominate the land from end to end. But childhood comes only once in a lifetime and, for fragrance and charm, the holiness of England is with these early saints, with the names of Aldhelm and Bede, Cuthbert and Dunstan, Ethelburgh and Frithona, Guthlac and Hilda and so on, pretty well throughout the alphabet.

Thus, the leaven of heaven mingles with the good wholesome English earth, whose tang and touch are familiar and gratifying. These saints satisfy us and put us at our ease; we gather that the feet of these saints trod the same ground as we walk. Some biographies can hardly be read, save

on one's knees or with one's head in the clouds  
Not so the biographies of the English saints.

I would have both:  
Wings to carry me to heaven,  
Feet to touch the sweet earth:  
I would deny neither.

In the course of the sketches that are to follow, we shall see the operation of the two movements so familiar in the history of Orthodox Christianity; a vertical movement towards God and eternity, and a horizontal movement towards mankind and the things and interests of time: the cult both of the hereafter and of now. It was the saints' love of God that kindled in them their love of men in an age of hatred and strife. Most of them were born and grew up in an atmosphere of political faction and feud, but before long we find them in a mission of peace and forgiveness. They are altogether homely and likeable.

Yes, they were such as inspire great and enduring friendships. If St Boniface cherished any earthly ambition, it was to be buried by the side of his spiritual daughter St Lioba: Lioba the beautiful and the learned, whose letters cheered and consoled him in his German exile. And such letters! 'I confess that seeing you too seldom with the eyes of the body, I cease not to look at you with the eyes of my heart. I have taken care, excellent brother, to send you this little present, not that I think it worthy of your attention, but that the tie of true love may unite us to the end of our days'.

Another case is that of St Frideswide of Oxford. Sick people followed her everywhere, and once a leper met her on the road: 'I conjure you by the Almighty God to kiss me in the name of Jesus Christ His Son'. And she making the sign of the cross kissed his lips, so that the scales of his disease fell off and his body became fresh and wholesome like that of a child. Then there was St Alfvold, the last bishop of Sherborne, who reposed singing merrily hymns to St Cuthbert. St Guthlac's great friend was St Edburgh, whose last gifts were a leaden coffin and a shroud. It was in his honour that Crowland Abbey was built, the bell of which was the largest and most tuneful in all England.

And when St Ceolfrid the abbot had grown old and decided to repose in Rome, he bade his community good-bye from the altar-steps and blessed them with a censer. But the usual litanies



were not sung, for no one had heart enough to intone the words. And so the six hundred monks him to the riverbank, where he kissed each in turn and then embarked on a small boat on which a cross was erected between two burning torches. His monks watched the flaming brands until they were out of sight. St John of Beverley, who loved the young, had a bodyguard of enthusiastic students who followed him about on horseback. Once a boy was thrown from a horse and fatally injured. He died in St John's arms saying: 'No, of course I'm not afraid, for you are with me, you are my bishop'.

For one thing, these saints were fortunate in their biographers. St Cuthbert's first biographer, the anonymous monk of Lindisfarne, was a writer of distinction and vitality who plainly understood what a Life ought to be. St Wilfrid had Eddius, a Kentman and teacher of Church music. He lived in between Sts Aldhelm and Bede. He is not exactly impartial, but an impartial writer would probably not want to write St Wilfrid's Life at all. His is a live narrative, full of homely details as, for instance, that his hero was affable of countenance, sturdy of limb, swift of foot and never gloomy. St Wilfrid came as near as matters to giving us an autobiography. Shortly before his death, realizing the historical importance of the events of his troubled career, he confided to his inseparable companion, Tatbert, a detailed narrative of his own life. This piece of secretarial work was carried on while the two were on horseback journeying from Evesham to Peterborough. In those days, when so much was done by word of mouth, the memory was as reliable as can be, so that Tatbert forgot nothing and in due course had it committed to writing by his scribes. The net result is that St Wilfrid stands before us as a figure of real flesh and blood.

'It takes a saint to write the life of a saint'. If we agree with this thought, then we should be thankful for the Venerable Bede. Besides being a saint he was an able and conscientious historian. He always wrote honestly and sincerely. He was at great pains to collect reliable information respecting men and women of spiritual repute up and down the country. Nor is he content to speak of the nobility, of their parents and the piety of their babyhood; he takes everything in his stride.

All subsequent biographers make use of St Bede, and quite a respectable Book of Saints might be compiled from his writings alone. His own aversions seldom influence his partiality. He

believed the Celtic monks to be in the wrong, but he had nothing but admiration for Sts Cuthbert, Aidan and Hilda. Many of the most treasured details of our national story we owe to his pages; and so with many of the most treasured details relating to the first English saints. The natural traits of their character he treats affectionately and with respect. In much of his detail he closely resembles Adamnan, the biographer of St Columba. This is how he describes one of the miracles wrought by the intercession of St Oswald:

'When a certain man happened to be journeying to where the king had fallen in battle, his horse suddenly began to tire, stand still, hang down his head, foam at the mouth and fall to the earth. The rider got down and, taking off the saddle, stood by until such time as the animal should either get up or die. For a long while the beast was sorely afflicted, turning this way and that, until at last it rolled over to the very spot where Oswald had been slain. At once the horse left off the inordinate motions of its limbs. First of all it rolled onto either side, as horses do when they wake up; then at once it got to its feet and began cropping the green grass of the field'.

The English saints are sharply defined. Sts Wilfrid and Cuthbert were devoted to the same cause, but in pursuing it, each retained his independence. They had no desire to exchange personalities. 'I wouldn't be you for the world' was more or less the motto of each. St Cuthbert's desire to live in peace was as strong as St Wilfrid's readiness for strife. 'You may be a holy man, but I follow another way', is St Hilda's implicit verdict on St Wilfrid, and she stuck to it right up to the last. The saints could defend themselves. When King Edgar rebuked St Edith for dressing elegantly, she replied: 'It is the heart that matters, and that I have given to God. While He possesses that, He will not worry about my clothes'.

We hear tell of their weaknesses; of what they ate and drank, and did not eat and drink. St Willehad never went beyond honey, herbs and apples, until he was persuaded to indulge the weakness of old age by eating some fish. St Wilfrid's custom was to wash every night in cold water. But he too had to give over in obedience to authority. And St Chad never overcame his terror of thunder. Almost up to the last, when thunder rolled, he would think of the Day of Judgement. He called it God's voice, which is exactly what the ancient Hebrews called it.

Their faith is not always poised, prudently balanced and gracefully conducted. They were not grubby folk; they did not despise water, except perhaps for drinking purposes. But they never humbugged themselves with illusions about cleanliness being next to godliness, or anything of the like. They were spiritual people and not pretentious and affected pietists, all out to edify and create good impressions. They had guts, what it takes to make saints.

This first flowering of our native holiness has its roots in English soil. It is racy of the English countryside, of the Yorkshire moors, the Lincoln fens, the Sussex downs, identified with the hamlets and seaports of those far off days – Whitby, Medehamsted, Wimborne, Evesham, Glastonbury, Lyminge, Athelney, Reculver and so on. There are many lesser places besides, the names of which come before us only in connection with this or that saint, and do not appear again until Doomsday Book.

Our ancestors were very fond of fresh air; many of their public meetings and even Church Councils were held in the open – those of Cloveshoe, for instance, where so much was settled, although nobody knows where exactly Cloveshoe was, but it may have been Brixworth in Northamptonshire. And one forms that impression of their saints, the impression that they were fresh-air people, with nothing stuffy about them.

St Guthlac is the John-the-Baptist of the collection, for his food was wild honey and herbs, and he was clothed in the skins of wild beasts — a dweller in the wilderness who lived on familiar terms with bird and beast. The crows were his messengers and bodyguard, the swallows cheered him up with their twitterings. He, on his side, built their nests for them and made baskets for the old ones to rest in. In hard winters, he extended his hospitality by making hiding places in the thatch of his cell. To those who asked how he managed to tame these wild creatures, he replied that any one at all with the grace of God about him could do it.



*The Saints of  
the Isles of  
the West*

In so far as England has a saintly period, that period is this one – the period when her main industry was the manufacture and export of saints. She manufactured some three hundred of them. While this exuberant flowering was in progress, no section of Christendom was able to compete with it, Ireland excepted and that other Celtic family group, made up of Wales, Cornwall and Brittany.

Since then we have had nothing like it. In a matter of this kind, comparisons are out of place. God is great in His saints. The divine is reflected in each and every one. They are the prisms through which His perfection passes that it may be broken up before our eyes into its infinite hues. Each plays some special role. Each retails a portion of His riches. All and sundry are conspicuous members of Christ's Body, and the Scripture warns us against easy-going estimations concerning their relative importance.

To brush aside this one or that in favour of the more impressive or spectacular would be equivalent to restricting the action of the law of

gravity to heavy objects alone. Holiness, whether found in a hovel or in a palace, uniformly exhibits the operation of a law according to which the God-made Man realizes through us something that He was not able to realize within the limits imposed on Him by His earthly life. Through each one, He goes on and on ministering and revealing to the end of time. Petty folk are invariably smaller than they imagine. But there are no such things as petty saints. They are great people; and great people are always far greater than they imagine, and also far greater than we can ever know.

All the same preferences, will creep in. We have only their portraits to go by; and, no doubt because some of the painters were inferior artists, we prefer A to B and C to D. These saints and their immediate successors derive from the springtime of the Christian faith in England. Very well! It is nothing against the lily and the rose to recognize that the violet and snowdrop have an acceptability and attraction all their own.

... *To be continued*

## CHARLEMAGNE, FATHER OF 'EUROPE'? An Orthodox Perspective on Karl the Tall

The West first began to separate from the Church at the time of Charlemagne.

*Solzhenitsyn*

### Introduction

THE ruler known to the English-speaking world by the French name Charlemagne was not in fact called Charles, but Karl. This we know since, although he was himself illiterate, his scribes always signed his name 'Karolus', not 'Carolus'. He was born on a 2 April, probably in 742 of unmarried parents<sup>1</sup>, the Frankish ruler, Pepin the Short (715–768), and Bertha, a Frankish mother from Laon in northern France. He grew up speaking Frankish, that is, old German, he loved hunting and swimming and on account of his height (1m 92 or 6'3½") he became known as 'Karolus Magnus', 'Karl the Tall'.

By the 730s the totally discredited Merovingian rulers of the Franks had all but died out and the way was open for the Carolingian line under Pepin the Short to take over. In 750 Pepin sent an envoy to the Greek Pope of Rome, St Zacharias (741–752), asking for his blessing to use the title of 'King'. At this time the Christian Emperors in New

Rome, Constantinople, were besieged by Muslim enemies. Rome, cut off from the Emperor partly by the Muslim domination of the Mediterranean, knew that the Emperors were unable to protect it from Lombard enemies in Italy<sup>2</sup>. Knowing this only too well and knowing that there were already other minor rulers in the Empire who recognized the one Emperor in New Rome, the Greek Pope therefore agreed to Pepin's request for a higher title, hoping to receive support in return.

Pepin duly received the royal unction from the English Apostle of the German Lands, St Boniface. In return St Boniface set about reforming the corrupt Frankish Church. Unfortunately, this task was not completed, since Boniface was martyred in 754. In that same year, the next Pope, Stephen III (752–757), confirmed the royal title, again hoping that Pepin would support the Papacy. This is exactly what Pepin did, twice entering Italy and delivering the Papacy from the Lombards.

When Pepin died in 768, his kingdom was divided between his two sons, Karl and Karloman.





*A contemporary statue of Karl the Tall, modelled on the statue of a Roman Emperor.*

However, in 771 Karl's younger brother, the pro-Lombard Karloman, died in mysterious circumstances, which were very convenient for Karl. Since Karl and his brother had agreed on very little and had been on the point of war, it has often been suggested that Karl had Karloman assassinated. However it may be, after Karloman's death, the twenty-nine year-old ruler was able to unite his father's kingdom and rule over on his own terms, under the name of Karl I.

### Karl the Empire-BUILDER

As sole King of the Franks, Karl's next ambition was to attempt to imitate the grandeur of the pagan Roman Emperors by restoring some of the Western part of their pagan Empire. In other words, having achieved a measure of power in a small part of Western Europe, like all *nouveaux riches*, the Franks now wanted all the trappings of power, that is, a distinctive ideology and a distinctive culture dependent on that ideology. In order to do this, Karl first had to build up an Empire by expanding his Frankish homeland. Hence most of his long reign was to be spent at war with the surrounding peoples. In all he mounted fifty-three campaigns

against them and he was at war for forty-five years out of the forty-six he reigned. He had an army of up to thirty thousand men, with, at its heart, heavy cavalry, which he used to further his expansionary imperialism.

Karl's first task was to defeat the Lombards to the south-east in Italy. Called on by Pope Adrian I (772-795) to do this, Karl had to mount five expeditions between 773 and 788 in order to subdue the Lombards. His other great task was to subdue the Saxons to the east of his Frankish Kingdom<sup>3</sup>. This war began in 774, but took him until 804. It was achieved only by ethnic cleansing and massacre – at one point Karl had 4,500 Saxon hostages beheaded. He also threatened all those who refused baptism with the sword, for he used baptism as part of his Frankish national ideology.

For this he was criticized, but only by his main advisor, the English Alcuin of York (c. 735-804), just as the English St Boniface before him had criticized the corruption of the Franks. Alcuin called the Frankish bishops and 'missionaries' 'predators, not preachers'. Their main activity was robbing the peoples of the newly-conquered lands, when they were not fighting, hunting and jousting. The Frankish technique of baptism or the sword was repeated to the northwest among the Frisians, whom Karl subjugated in 785.

As a *caesaropapist*, Karl's concept of Christianity was purely formal and political. The idea of inward repentance and prayer, of morality, of a genuine change of heart and therefore mind, was alien to him. This ideology was shared by virtually all his senior clergy (but not the ordinary village priests), who quite happily combined their Frankish paganism with formal Christianity<sup>4</sup>. As for the Frankish aristocrats, they treated both churches and serf priests as private property, a problem which would later lead to the whole Hildebrandine struggle in the late eleventh century.

We should remember that even after St Boniface' struggles, there were in 757 still priests who had not been baptized, priests who had half a dozen concubines, and priests who sacrificed animals to pagan gods. Such was the decadence of the Franks, who would undertake to teach the rest of the world 'the true faith'. In the absence of any spiritual life or of priests who could give guidance, little wonder that the people of the age sought desperately the relics of the ancient and real saints and even Karl was obliged to fight against false saints.

To the south-west of his territory Karl created the kingdom of Aquitaine in the south of France, also attacking the Christian Basques in the Pyrenees and the Muslims and Christians (known as Mozarabs) in north-eastern Spain. However, this was largely unsuccessful and it took him until 801 to capture Barcelona. To the east he attacked the Bavarians, the Slavs and the Avars. Karl stirred up the Croats against the Avars, whom he finally defeated in 796, looting huge amounts of gold from them. In reality, Karl's conquests were limited to the area around his Frankish homeland, where he set up 'marches' (militarized frontier zones).

Thus, in 789–790, he set up the Breton march to the west in order to subjugate the free Bretons. To the south he set up a Spanish march in what is now Catalonia. To the east he gave the name 'Ostmark' – 'the eastern march' to former Avar Austria. (Part of Austria bordering with Slovenia is still today called 'Steiermark' (Styria), though this march was created in the tenth century). And to the north we also still have the name Denmark, the march of the Danes.

Further from his frontiers Karl suffered defeats. For example, his forces were defeated at the hands of Christian Basque shepherds, who defended themselves from their mountain fastnesses in a famous victory at Roncesvalles in 778, killing Karl's invading troops<sup>5</sup>. As we have said, he mainly failed to defeat the Muslims and Christians in the Iberian Peninsula and, like Hitler long after him, he also faced difficulties in the south of France. The Bretons remained largely unconquered, wishing to remain free and Karl never conquered the south of Italy, occupied by Imperial Roman Constantinople, or Denmark and the Scandinavian north. Moreover, like Napoleon and Hitler after him, he never managed to conquer either the British Isles or the Russian lands, which were then in the hands of Slavs and nomadic Asian tribes. The reality was that Karl's 'Empire' was just a small group of Western European provinces, assembled by war and terror.

### Karl the Politician

Following his military successes, in 794, Karl started building a palace for his 'Greater Frankland', setting up a court in the centre of his homeland in Aachen. This was the old Roman station and spa of '*Aquisgranum*', where Karl's architects imitated Roman models and styles, using the gold and treasure Karl had plundered from the Avars. The main church here, dedicated to the

Mother of God, was an imitation of the church of St Vitalis in Ravenna. In general, Karl was actually trying to build not a, but the New Rome, as Constantine had long ago done in Constantinople. The real New Rome was dismissed as 'Greek' by Karl and the Christian Faith dismissed as 'the Greek Faith'<sup>6</sup>. But the reality of Karl's imitation 'New Rome' in Aachen was that it was little more than a small town of a province of the vast Roman Empire of Constantinople.

However, in Aachen, surrounded by gold and silver, the whole court, in fact a tribal clan, was very much built not to the glory of God, but to the glory of Karl. Here he lived the Frankish tribal life, like African chiefs of more recent times. A typically polygamous Frank, he had ten wives and concubines in all, though not all at the same time, and eighteen children, among them his notorious unmarried daughters and their many offspring. By 800 he had been married five times, but he only recognized three sons as legitimate. In Aachen Karl indulged his passions (and he was a passionate man, given to fits of rage and cruelty) for hunting, swimming and also talking (he would often debate from his swimming pool). He also became very overweight, being virtually addicted to roast meat.

In order to keep his 'Empire' together, Karl was obsessed with a centralized administration, reforming and minting a new coinage. He divided his 'Empire' into 300 counties and ruled over them through powerful royal envoys and, underneath them, a hierarchy of dukes (in charge of several counts), margraves (counts in charge of a march), counts (in charge of a county) and viscounts (deputies of counts). Karl's 'civil service' was notorious for its corruption and the whole system seems largely to have worked through bribes.

Like his father and grandfather before him, Karl himself would use Church lands to reward his bureaucrats. He appointed lay-abbots and bishops completely as he wished, or left sees vacant to benefit from profits from Church lands (Metz was vacant for twenty-seven years). Thus began the secularization of monasteries and monastic life, obsessed with outward reform, but not inward repentance. Piety would come only later, with the reforms of 817 of St Benedict of Aniane († 821) under the rule of Karl's son, Louis. However, these reforms actually weakened the very structures of Karl's conglomerate and corrupt kingdom. Karl even tried to centralize and make uniform the rites for the Church services. Above all, Karl refused to implement a series of independent Metropolitan

Churches, which the Papacy deemed a suitable system to govern Karl's territory. He did not wish to delegate, to lose power, but on the contrary, to centralize it, so that his power over the Church would be total.

He did however encourage learning among the barbaric Germanic tribes, himself even learning to speak, though not read, Latin. Notably, this illiterate ruler fought against illiteracy, which was so widespread among the clergy. His main advisor, Alcuin, reformed the handwriting of the period, making it much more compact and easier to read. This was an achievement. Karl's task was enormous: the knowledge of the ancient Romans and Greeks had been lost. The network of Roman roads was falling into decay, Roman engineering skills had been lost, most of the Church Fathers were unknown and, unlike the ancient pagans and the Church Fathers, the Franks did not even know that the world was spherical and thought that it was flat!

In Aachen Karl had assembled around himself some of the most educated Western Europeans of the time, from England, Spain, Italy and Ireland. At court in Aachen each was given a pagan name, such as Flaccus, Homer, Pindar. They lived in corresponding decadence, where wine and other worse temptations came freely. Preaching, missionary example and spiritual life were quite unknown, as elsewhere in the Frankish Church at the time. Furthermore, few of them were priests. Angilbert and Eginhard were lay-abbots, Alcuin a deacon, and though Theodulf was a bishop, he lived with his daughter. Karl did not take a pagan name, but flattered himself by taking the Biblical name of King David, like the Emperors of New Rome.

These intellectuals occupied themselves with a rationalistic and therefore superficial philosophy. Theology and spiritual understanding were beyond them. As the German historian Fichtenau in his *The Carolingian Empire* has remarked, their spirit was 'that of Origen', they preferred 'profane knowledge' to that of the Fathers and 'not one of them can be counted among the saints'. Their spirit was alien to the monks of the monasteries, as at Fulda, and St Bede would have castigated his compatriot Alcuin for his secular spirit. Like Karl's senior clergy, they dressed luxuriously and some, like Bishop Theodulf in his campaign of 801, were seen to be men of violence.

Notably, these intellectuals formulated Karl's ideology, a peculiar version of Christianity, which

he used to denigrate real Christianity. Although this ideology was useful internally in forcing Frankish aristocrats (which includes his bishops) to abandon their primitive barbaric superstitions, its main use was to promote Karl's own absurd pretension to be the sole true Christian ruler. His personal ideologist was Theodulf, a Visigoth from Spain, whom Karl had made Bishop of Orleans. In 794, at the heretical Council of Frankfurt, in an attack on the Seventh Œcumenical Council of the whole Church which had restored the veneration of icons, Theodulf and the others compiled the so-called '*Libri Karolini*', the Books of Karl. These were the foundation of Karl's anti-Church ideology.

These Books of the 'anti-Council' of Frankfurt were basically a polemical attack on the teachings of the Church. They were an attempt to promote Karl and his kingdom as the only true Christian kingdom in the world, all others being heretics. Thus, above all, they promoted Karl's semi-iconoclastic views, that icons should not be venerated, though not destroyed either. (Full iconoclasm only came to the fore much later in the Germanic Reformation of Luther). And they also contained Karl's mission statement, the *filioque* error, which Theodulf developed from an old anti-Arian polemic from Spain. This error meant that Karl and his little clique confessed a different Creed, a different Holy Trinity, in other words, a different God, from the rest of Christendom, from his own people, from the Popes of Rome and from all the other Patriarchs. Karl's Books justified the *filioque*, accusing 'the Greeks', i.e. all Christians, of being heretical by 'omitting' the *filioque* from the Creed!

Karl's true aim here was of course to use the *filioque* as an ideological excuse to support his claim to be the true Christian Emperor 'against the Greeks'. The more he could slander the real Orthodox, the more he could make himself out to be Orthodox. It was a simple piece of politics. Indeed, in 809 Karl even summoned a Council in Aachen, which declared that the *filioque* was 'a dogma necessary for salvation' (!) However, the then leader of the Orthodox West, Pope Leo III, thoroughly rejected the heresy. Some eighty years later the provincial and primitive theology of the *filioque*, which by then had spread, was dismissed in a brilliant and sophisticated treatise by St Photius of Constantinople. At the same time, like Pope Leo III in 808, Pope John VIII (872-882), also completely rejected this crass error. Nevertheless, by the eleventh century the *filioque* had spread to



Rome and all its heretical consequences were beginning to become apparent.

### Karl the Emperor

Nevertheless, on 25 December 800, the successor of Pope Adrian I, Pope Leo III (795–816), crowned Charlemagne Emperor in Rome. Although this act seems very strange, given that the legitimate Christian Emperor ruled in the Imperial Capital in New Rome, Constantinople, we must understand its context.

Firstly, in general, the Christian Emperors were still too weak to protect the Popes in Rome and the Pope needed help to survive. Secondly, in particular, Pope Leo had in 799 almost been killed in a rebellion in Rome. Imprisoned on absurd trumped-up charges, he had been rescued only by Karl's envoys in Rome. No doubt, Pope Leo was personally grateful to Karl and wished to reward him. However, the Pope's carefully chosen method upset Karl, rather than pleased him. For by crowning Karl, he showed that only a Pope can crown a Western ruler, that Karl was dependent on the Church, that he was a subject first and only then a ruler. Moreover, just in case Karl might have any pretensions in Italy, the Papacy protected its territories there from Karl through a forged document known as 'The Donation of Constantine'. It was only in the fifteenth century that the descendants of the Franks discovered that this document was in fact a forgery.

As a result of all this, later Karl himself did not allow the Pope to crown his own son Emperor. Karl crowned him himself, and in Aachen, not in Rome. Moreover, a thousand years later another Western tyrant, Napoleon, who much admired Karl, also crowned himself, having first taken the Pope prisoner. Naturally, the title of 'Emperor' bestowed on Karl shocked the Christians in Constantinople when they learned of it. There can only be one Emperor. However, we should understand that Karl's exact title was 'An Emperor of the Romans', meaning in fact 'Emperor of those in Old Rome'. Whatever he may have imagined, he was not the Emperor of the Roman Empire, but in fact a local ruler of old Rome, in reality a mere Frankish king, albeit one powerful enough to protect the Roman Papacy.

This was why, after unsuccessfully trying to marry Empress Irene's son, Constantine VI, to Karl's favourite daughter, Rotrude, and then marry Karl himself to the Empress St Irene (797–802) in order

to control him, New Rome did come to accept Karl's title. However, this was done only in full two years after Karl was dead and then only as 'an Emperor', certainly not as 'The Emperor of the Romans'. They understood that the title had no longer-term or deeper significance: it was only a title given in exchange for help to an old ruler on the semi-barbarian fringes of the Empire. After him, it would hopefully disappear, together with his doctrinal errors.

From about 810 on, Karl, now aged 68, had great difficulty in resisting his enemies, to whom were now not only Muslims and Magyars but above all Vikings. And inside the 'Empire', there were increasingly revolts, refusals to accept the injustices of Karl's system. In a state of some repentance, in 811 Karl put down his arms and in 813 he crowned his son Louis. (Louis, perhaps rightly called 'the Pious', had himself re-crowned in 816 by the Pope). In January 814, after going hunting, he fell ill with pleurisy and died. He was buried in a Roman sarcophagus, appropriately depicting Pluto, the pagan god of the underworld, raping Persephone.

### Karl after Death

Karl's one-man 'Empire' fell apart at once, civil wars, invasions, pirates all came and Karl's territories divided into three separate parts. Approximately these were: western Germany; western France; an intermediate area composed of Holland, eastern France, Switzerland and northern Italy. Huns from the east, Bretons from the west, Vikings from the north and Arabs from the south all threatened even this. But above all, the intermediate part fell prey to the first two. Indeed, this middle area became a bone of contention between France and Germany until the twentieth century, as each fought over Alsace-Lorraine. One scholar has called this ignominy a 'futile and indeed ridiculous attempt to establish a Germanic Roman Empire'<sup>7</sup>. Put simply: a mere upstart province with an upstart ideology cannot be universal.

Nevertheless, after his death Karl became a legendary figure among the Franks. In about 840 his biography was written by his admirer, Eginhard. Among the intimidated Slav peoples his name Karl, under the forms 'kral' and 'korol' became the Slavic word for 'King', as his very name had become associated with kingship. In the later tenth century the Saxon 'Emperors' tried to imitate Karl, foolishly forcing the Slavs to accept baptism, again foolishly

confusing pagan Rome, which they tried to renew, with Christian Rome in Constantinople. Unlike them, Constantinople had moved on from pagan Rome and its primitive values, having made sacred and transfigured its pagan culture. Among them the external had become internal, Christianity was understood among the masses to be about the salvation of the soul and moral regeneration, it was not, as with Karl, a mere State ideology that could justify aggressive imperialist expansionism. Those who followed Karl belonged to a 'Roman Empire' that was clearly only a Germanic Empire, their claimed universalism was in fact merely local and provincial.

However, it was only in the eleventh century, after Western Europe had definitively separated from the Church, that Karl's *filioque* ideology became the flag that rallied the whole Western European elite who had in spirit become 'Franks'. Thus, the word 'Europe' became wholly an ideological concept, not a geographical reality. And at the end of the eleventh century, Anselm of Aosta, the Norman-installed Archbishop of Canterbury and 'Father of Scholasticism' and the feudal theory of 'satisfaction', wrote the first defence of the *filioque*, 'Against the Greeks'. His work was of course based on philosophy, not theology, as would be the even later anti-Church *filioque* philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

Thus, the very word 'Frank', describing Karl's nationality, became a byword for any Western subjugator of native peoples, the local and provincial had become the universal and apparently 'sophisticated'. For instance, the Normans who imitated Karl in Sicily and then in England, were called Franks by those they subjugated. Similarly, just like Karl had done elsewhere, when they wished to subjugate the Welsh, they set up 'the Welsh marches' (marks), adopting a similar system on the borders of Scotland and, above all, in Ireland. Here, too, they were called Franks. In the twelfth century Karl was celebrated in song by the French troubadours, who identified him with France. He also became the admiration of the barbaric Crusaders who set up 'Frankish' kingdoms in the Holy Land and in Constantinople.

In Eastern Europe the Teutonic Knights, thankfully defeated by St Alexander of the Neva in the thirteenth century, tried to extend Karl's territories to the east under his ideology. They named the north of Poland 'Neumark' – the new march. They extended the barbaric style of architecture, which in the West itself was later

called 'Gothic', as far east as Kosice in eastern Slovakia, setting up their castles to oppress the native Slavs all through eastern Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, persecuting local people in the same way as the Normans had earlier done in England and Wales. This was the same technique as Europeans would later use with their forts in the Americas, North Africa and all through their Empires.

At the demand of the Germanic Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1122–1190) and the French Duke of Normandy and King of England, Henry II Plantagenet (1133–1189), in 1165 Pope Pascal III of Rome beatified Karl, one of the bloodiest rulers of all time. In France Karl inspired the Crusades and later Charles V, Louis XI, Louis XIV. Karl's system of rule was introduced in a modified form in colonies in the Americas and in Africa and Asia, where native populations were massacred or enslaved. More recently, in revolutionary France Napoleon, with his law code and metric system, and in Fascist Germany, Hitler, obsessively imitated Karl's centralized administration and system of 'marches'. Hitler's system of slave labour camps and ethnic cleansing was only an imitation on an industrial scale of Karl's, whose hatred of the Slavs he shared.

Wherever there were tyrants who wished to justify their aggression against other peoples, Karl became a model. To this day, Karl is seen by today's filioquists as 'the father of Europe'. Indeed, the original European Common Market, the first European Union, covered more or less the same territory as Karl's territories. The former French President Giscard D'Estaing called it 'a Neo-Carolingian Empire'. And all forms of the supranational European Union, like Karl, have been founded on unelected (and often corrupt) bureaucracy, centralization and uniformity, or 'harmonization', as is the euphemism. This vision of the Federal European Union was also Hitler's, although because he tried to implement it by military force, rather than by economic bribery as today, he failed.

## Conclusion

In Karl's own lifetime, his 'Europe' covered only a small corner of geographical Europe. (In reality Europe extends from Iceland to the Urals and from Lapland to Gibraltar). However, it was Karl's local 'Europe' which expanded from the eleventh century on and the identity of Karl's 'Europe' or 'the West' is in his *filioque* ideology. It was on account

of Karl's ideology that in the eleventh century virtually the whole of Western Europe left the Roman Christian Empire, centred in Constantinople, and became an assemblage of schismatic provinces, sharing in the *filioque* ideology. Since, from the Christian (Orthodox) point of view, Karl was a heresiarch, who has to be seen as the founder of the schism of the Western world, what was his ideology and what are its ramifications?

Karl's *filioque* ideology asserted that spiritual authority proceeds from the Father and from the Son, both God and man, rather than from the Father alone. The *filioque* thus implied that any representative of Christ on earth had spiritual authority, since the Holy Spirit must proceed from him. As a Caesaropapist, Karl considered that the representative of Christ on earth was himself. However, whatever Karl may have thought, this would become irrelevant as soon as he had died.

Thus, in the eleventh century, with the Hildebrandine Revolution, the German Popes who also openly confessed the *filioque*, declared themselves to be 'Vicars of Christ', thus guaranteeing the secularization of the Papacy and all who followed them, including those in 'monasteries'. Unlike Karl, the Popes were part of a hereditary institution. Therefore, spiritual authority belonged to them and all who obeyed the Popes, in other words, to all Roman Catholics, who so became superior human-beings.

According to their ideology, they had a spiritual authority which made them superior to all other cultures in the world and gave them the right to conquer. This is exactly what happened throughout the Middle Ages and afterwards, from the Normans to the Crusaders, right up to Columbus and the Conquistadors and beyond. This is the result of faith understood purely externally. As one Non-Orthodox writer has put it 'People did not understand – unlike the Christians in the East, nourished by rich sources of spiritual ascetic life – that the time had come to move the battlefield from the world to the soul. Instead they wasted their energies on external organization'<sup>8</sup>.

With the Reformation that followed in the sixteenth century, this superiority was 'democratized', for it came to mean above all Protestants. And so their colonization and ideology were also justified. Today, all who accept the Western ideology of superiority, regardless of whether they even believe in Christ or not, are 'superior' to others. This has justified, for example, the recent

*de facto* 'Protestant' invasion of Iraq in the name of 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'civilization', just as the Crusaders justified their barbaric pillage and slaughter, hiding behind noble ideals many centuries ago. The processes of globalization, that began many centuries ago, mean that today all who accept the humanist, secularist ideology of the West are 'justified'. Karl's original local and provincial error of over twelve centuries ago has thus become universal, globalized<sup>9</sup>.

We believe that it can only be opposed by a truly global system of belief, a universal faith. We believe that this can only be Orthodox Christianity, the Faith of the Church of God, the Body of Christ the God-Man, Crucified and Risen from the dead, for our sakes and for our salvation.

- 1 They married in 744. Thus, like the much later tyrant, the eleventh-century William of Normandy, Karl was a bastard. However, we would do well to recall the old saying: 'There is no such thing as illegitimate children, only illegitimate parents'.
- 2 We cannot but sympathize with the plight of the Popes of Rome in seeking the protection of the Franks against the Lombards, given the weakness of the Christian Emperor in Constantinople.
- 3 We should note that, unlike his later imitator, Hitler, Karl was no racist. He slaughtered Germanic people, Saxons, Bavarians and Frisians, and non-Germanic people alike, though it is true that both of them hated the Slavs.
- 4 See especially Chapter V on Nobles and Civil Servants in his *Das Karolingische Imperium* (1958).
- 5 To this day, the Basques still celebrate this famous victory, which the Franks treat as a defeat, commemorated in their 'Song of Roland', written in the eleventh century. In this largely fictional work of propaganda, the defeat is represented as a Saracen and not Christian Basque victory over the semi-barbarian Franks.
- 6 As the late Fr John Romanidis consistently pointed out it in his writings, it is this absurd propaganda that has been idly repeated for centuries by ethnocentric and secular-minded historians in Western Europe. They have even gone so far as to denigrate Christian Constantinople by the pagan name 'Byzantium' and talk of 'The Byzantine Church', which would mean 'The Pagan Church'! Karl's point was to try and make out that he, this illiterate and iconoclastic Frank, was the only true 'Roman'. This of course was an open invitation to the later barbaric Crusaders who sacked Constantinople. Perhaps they believed that it was pagan – not that this would be an excuse for their evil crimes and blasphemies. Certainly, as an Orthodox priest, I have sometimes been asked by Protestants whether I am a pagan or a Christian. Clearly, the deliberate ignorance sown by Karl is still active. One wonders if Dr Goebbels knew about this.
- 7 See *The First Europe*, C. Delisle Burns, 1947, p. 618.
- 8 Fichtenau, *op. cit.*, Chapter VI, 'The Poor'.
- 9 See 'Orthodox *Filioque* and Non-Orthodox *Filioque*' in *Orthodox England*, Vol 5, No 2.

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Why is it so difficult to become Orthodox?

*A. S., Paris*

Those who are interested in joining the Orthodox Church (and there are few who have such faith) have first to overcome the barrier of their personal prejudices ('Orthodoxy is against my culture'). Secondly, they then have to become Orthodox, in the real sense. This means overcoming the barrier of psychology, which means overcoming 'convertitis'.

This is the disease of the neophyte, wishing very suddenly to change themselves and the world around them. They may firstly take on themselves too much, trying to become 'super-Orthodox'. This generally ends in disillusion (illusion always results in disillusion) or hypocrisy, even loss of faith, and generally seems to consist of dressing as badly as possible. Secondly, they may wish, also very suddenly, to change the world around them, to convert everyone they know. This may involve the pride of judging – and condemning – others, being categorical and dogmatic, having the same unrealistic expectations of others as of themselves. Without any experience of spiritual life and little knowledge of living Orthodoxy, confusing what is secondary with what is primary, details with essentials, lacking any discernment at all, such zeal is in fact pride. This too generally ends in disillusion or hypocrisy – only God is pious – and even loss of faith.

I have known some people get through 'convertitis' in a few months. But I know others who have taken forty years and still not succeeded. However, if people do overcome the barriers put up by their own psychology and its unrealistic expectations, then they can enter the realm of theology. And that, by the way, does not mean reading books about theories. That means living Orthodoxy, not as a set of consumer's 'pick and mix' ideas, but as a way of life.



I have recently been reading a book (by Ian Wilson and Barry Schwartz) about the Turin Shroud. I have to say

that I find the arguments for the authenticity of the Shroud fairly convincing, although I must stress that my Orthodox faith would be completely unaffected if the Shroud were not genuine. I have not come across any Orthodox books on this subject, and I was wondering if you could tell me what the Orthodox consensus of opinion was on the Shroud?

*D. C., Bournemouth*

Yes, it is an interesting question. There is something on this in one of the early volumes of *OE*. I too read Wilson's book when it first came out (in about 1979?) and found it fairly convincing. The Orthodox Church has no teaching or dogmatic views on things that happen outside Her: hence no consensus. Some Orthodox firmly believe in the Turin Shroud, others do not, yet others (like myself) remain with an open mind, unsure.

The reason why it is peripheral to Orthodoxy is because we already know what Christ looked like from all our icons of the Saviour, which are based not on the fuzzy image, obtained by negative photography of His possible burial shroud, but on the much clearer Icon Not Made by Hands. Hence no Orthodox books on the subject.



We have just bought a little boat and would like to know what sort of name we could give it. Have you any ideas of an Orthodox sort?

*E. M., Australia*

How about the Apostle Peter? Or St John? Or Zebedee? Or St Nicholas? Or there are place-names, like Galilee, Myra, or maybe a place in your native Greece?



My husband is shortly being posted to Iraq. Is there anything we can do in particular?

*N. A., Colchester*

Come to confession and communion. Ask for the prayers of your Guardian Angels and Patron-Saints every day. Make sure that your husband has in his pocket at all times Psalm 90 (Psalm 91 in the King James), 'He that dwelleth ...' Ask your



children and your mother-in-law to remember him in your prayers also. And do not fret unnecessarily; if you are all praying, he is in God's hands. His Will will be done.



Who do you pray to if you are worried that you might not receive communion before you die?

*J. L., London*

The Great Martyr Barbara.



In conversations about astrology and horoscopes, what is the Christian answer to the question, 'What is your sign?'

*M. Y., USA*

Someone here told me, I think, the best answer I have heard: 'My sign is the sign of the cross'.



How many books are there in the Orthodox Bible, what are they and what is their order?

*E. D., Kent*

In the Orthodox (Septuagint) Old Testament, there are fifty books, several of them do not exist in the Hebrew Old Testament and others have different names from the Hebrew Old Testament, which was written down over a thousand years after the Greek. We should recall that the word Bible is simply the Greek for 'Books'.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Kingdoms (1 Samuel), 2 Kingdoms (2 Samuel), 3 Kingdoms (1 Kings), 4 Kingdoms (2 Kings), 1 Paralipomenon (1 Chronicles), 2 Paralipomenon (2 Chronicles), 1 Esdras (Ezra), Nehemiah, 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Esther, Job, The Psalter, The Parables of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Songs of Solomon, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations of Jeremiah, The Epistle of Jeremiah, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Avdias (Obadiah), Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Avvakum (Habbakuk), Sophonias (Zephaniah), Haggai, Zacharias (Zechariah), Malachi, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, 3 Maccabees, 3 Esdras.

In the Orthodox New Testament, there are twenty-seven books. The order is:

The Four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; The Acts of the Apostles, The Epistle of James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians,

1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, Revelation.



Is not having confession regularly really a problem?

*P. G., London*

Yes, it is spiritually dangerous. Those who do not have confession regularly, I mean at least once every month or two (forty days is a good figure), tend to be victims of habitual sins. This means ingrained passions, such as jealousy, pretentiousness, selfishness, vanity, lust, greed, despondency etc. The worst thing is that they can then lapse into self-justification for their weaknesses, so that when they do finally get to confession, they say: 'I have not done anything bad, the same as everyone else'. That is a twofold sin, for it is a failure to confess one's personal sins and also condemnation of others, bringing them down to one's own level.



Can a simple layman write about theology?

*V. K., London*

I would say that only simple laymen (or clergy) can write about theology. Complicated people cannot do it! Of course, the simplicity has to have spiritual experience. Where there is simplicity, there is always some degree of theology.



Why do Jews, like Orthodox, wear their wedding rings on their right hands?

*S. P., Felixstowe*

Any faith that maintains links with the Old Testament does this. Whether it is the Orthodox Church, Judaism or Islam, all of them maintain the importance of the right hand. There are dozens of references in the Old Testament (and by continuity, in the New Testament) to the right hand, above all, that the Lord sits on the right hand of the Father. Thus, we make the sign of the cross with the right hand, sign ourselves from right to left, and wear a wedding ring on the right hand. In Western Europe, they maintained this also, as part of the heritage from the first millennium. They lost the Tradition afterwards, changing it only during the late Middle Ages, confusing right and left or preferring the left for sentimental reasons.



Is it possible to serve the liturgy using something other than bread and wine?

*C. H., London*

Only with the permission of a bishop and in specific circumstances. I have not heard of anything other than bread, made from wheat, being used. However, at the Moscow Council of 1917–1918, given the persecution that had already started, clergy of the Russian Church were allowed to use juice from berries instead of wine, if it were absolutely impossible to obtain wine. This indeed happened.



What 'types' of converts are there?

*M. M., Paris*

I think that there are many types of people who join the Church. However, I have noticed one common problem among all nationalities of people who become Orthodox Christians and that is the problem of zeal. Beware of zeal! Many people who start off with great zeal later lapse or else, and this is sometimes even more dangerous, they remain in the Church, or rather on the fringes of the Church, and use their zeal to justify their lapse. I have seen so many figures who, even after 30, 40 or 50 years, do this. It is distressing.



I have read that the Russian Revolution happened because Russians stopped fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays. What do you think of this?

*V. K., London*

This saying is often attributed to St Seraphim of Sarov. I think it needs interpreting. What it means is that Russia fell because people lost their spiritual ideals, their Orthodox values, which had given them the spiritual unity of a Russian Orthodox land. Thus, when they lost their spiritual ideal, they rejected everything that it entailed. For instance, they rejected the spiritual ideal of the Orthodox Monarchy, around which Orthodox Russia had been united socially, economically and politically, and they also stopped fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays and so stopped giving alms to the poor – which created social injustices, which created the Revolution. So, I agree with the saying.



Where does the English word 'Lent' come from? Can we use it as an Orthodox word?

*V. K., London*

Lent is in fact short for lenten. The word lenten was the Old English word for spring and comes simply from the word 'lengthen', since spring is the time when the days lengthen. The word 'spring' began to be used, because 'lenten', or 'lent' for short, came to mean the spring fast. This is what in Orthodox languages is called the Great Fast. I can see no reason why we cannot use 'Lent' to mean the Great Fast in Orthodox practice, though to say 'Great Lent' is incorrect.



Has the phenomenon of the Holy Fire in Jerusalem always occurred?

*J. A., Essex*

As far as I know, always, with the one exception of 1923. The then Patriarch of Jerusalem, Constantine IV, had sided with the modernist renovationists in Russia against Patriarch Tikhon. As he was a supporter of the Russian schism, the holy fire did not descend when he entered the Tomb of Christ. The furious Arab crowd, many of them Muslims, was so enraged that they killed him.



Would you recommend joining Orthodox internet fora or Orthodox chatrooms?

*P. T., California*

Personally, I would avoid them like the plague. They quickly become time-wasting and sometimes aggressive polemics, where opinions, and not knowledge and experience, loom large. I think we should take or leave others' viewpoints (obviously, including my own, and this one!), without arguing. Trying to come to an agreement on often very fine points is futile. The whole idea smacks of Protestant opinionatedness. The Church is run by the Holy Spirit through bishops, fortunately not through us and our opinions. Some who live off such sites may not always be ready to listen to others and so such sites can develop into a waste of prayer time.



What do the Six Psalms at the beginning of Matins represent?

*J. S., Felixstowe*

The Last Judgement



## A STORY OF ST NICHOLAS

ONCE, in the old Christian days, in the land of Cyprus, there lived a simple, illiterate man who worked the land.

One day, a monk knocked at the door of the peasant's house and asked him if he could eat and stay the night in his home. The simple but gentle peasant accepted. During the evening, seeing the good-heartedness of the farmer, the monk started talking to him about the Christian Faith and the peasant listened avidly. The next day, as a thank-you present, the monk gave the peasant an icon of the Mother of God and told him that the icon would protect him and his house. In his simplicity, the peasant gladly accepted the icon, hung it on his wall and bowed in front of the Mother of God whenever he left the house.

One day, going to the market, the peasant noticed a stall selling icons. Seeing the icons, the peasant thought: 'I'll buy the icon of the man on his horse with his sword, so that he can protect my house'. The peasant then noticed an icon of an old man with a white beard and decided to buy the icon for the protection of his house too. The stallholder told him that the icons were of Saint George and Saint Nicholas. He then hung the icons next to the icon of the Mother of God and bowed in front of them as he went to work.

However, one day, coming back from the land to have lunch, the peasant found his house robbed, with nothing left inside except for the three icons. The peasant was very upset. In his simplicity, he

went to stand in front of the icons and said to the icon of the Mother of God: 'My house was robbed by thieves, however, you have a baby to take care of and you must be busy with the baby, so it's not your fault.' Then the peasant spoke to the icon of Saint George: 'You're fighting the devil in this world and by the time you get down off your horse and take your armour off, it would have been too late'. Then he spoke to the icon of the old man with the white beard: 'You don't have a baby to take care of and you don't have to get off a horse and have armour to take off to stop the thieves. You could have protected my house'. Very upset, the peasant decided to go back to work and returned from the land in the evening, to eat the little he had for supper.

However, before he could touch his supper, the peasant heard a knock on his door and went to open it. In front of his door stood two men with big bags, containing his stolen belongings. The two men said: 'Please forgive us. We're the thieves who robbed you. As we were running away from your land, an old man with a white beard appeared and said: "If you don't return those stolen belongings to their rightful owner, you'll be punished severely". The old man disappeared suddenly and we felt a fear we couldn't explain. So we came to bring back the things we stole from you. Forgive us'. The peasant forgave them and, turning to the icons, bowed deeply to the icon of Saint Nicholas, asking for forgiveness, realizing that 'the old man with the white beard' had indeed helped him.

