

# ORTHODOX ENGLAND

*In this issue:*

*From the Holy Fathers: St Columba's End  
and Transfiguration*

*The Saints of England*

*St John's Orthodox Church  
in Colchester*

*But for Beauty*

*and much more . . .*

**Vol 12, Number 2  
December 2008**



ORTHODOX ENGLAND VOL. 12 NO. 2

[www.orthodoxengland.org.uk](http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk)

A Quarterly Journal of English Orthodox Reading

December 2008

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Published with the blessing of the Very Reverend Mark, Archbishop of the Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland of the Church Outside Russia.

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Publication dates: 1 September, 1 December, 1 March, 1 June.

## Editorial:

# ORTHODOXY AND THE ENGLISH NATIONAL CHARACTER

**W**E can only talk about an 'English National Character' or any other 'National Character' in a very loose sense. Everybody is, after all, different. On the other hand, there are certain characteristics that we find much more often in one nationality and not another. Yes, there are always quiet Italians, noisy Englishmen, food-hating Frenchmen, un-conformist Germans, vodka-hating Russians and understated Americans, to gainsay the stereotypes. Nevertheless, loosely speaking, there are certain characteristics that are generally much more common among one national group than another. These probably depend on such factors as geography, climate and the experiences of national history.

However, since history changes, we have to admit that any 'National Character' also changes over time. Anyone who knew England of forty years or more ago and England today can see some changes. There has been the spiritual and moral decline of the 1960s ('God is dead'), the resulting breakdown of family life in the 1970s and increasing atomisation of society in the 1980s (Mrs Thatcher's 'no such thing as society' – in reality there is – only not in her head), the consequent loss of sobriety and restraint, resulting in the refusal to take responsibility (why take responsibility in the 'permissive' society of the Welfare State?).

All this has resulted in an almost total lack of self-discipline and consequent loss of inner peace, what the media call 'Broken Britain', the product of Blair and those who preceded him. On the other hand, as a result of this national humiliation it is now, thank God, less common to meet the old arrogance of the ruling race. This was very common among the old Victorian upper classes, who considered that there were two sorts of human-beings, the inferior foreigner and the superior Briton.

If we go further back in history, the changes in 'National Character' have been far greater. Thus the Englishman before the Reformation of the sixteenth century and the regicide of the seventeenth century, was different from the Englishman after those tragic events. In order to stop the incredible bloodshed of the English Civil Wars on an island (10% of the population dead,

not including in Ireland), it was necessary to make compromises and learn tolerance. So there was born Anglicanism and the society of compromise. Now compromise and tolerance need not be bad in themselves, but when they turn into a culture of compromise, a compromise of integrity and principles, a rejection of the Absolute God and His Church, the mentality that 'everything is relative', compromise and tolerance in fact lead to indifference, apathy and spiritual death.

The well-known Russian theologian and thinker Fr Constantine Zaitsev wrote about the English character (or rather the Anglican character, which to some extent influenced much of English life) in the second part of his book of *Lectures on Pastoral Theology*, published in Jordanville in 1961. Although this is nearly fifty years ago, even twenty-five years after reading it, I am still struck by the relevance of his insightful observations. What a pity that he and his truth-telling are not known, unlike the frauds and compromisers who are well-known to ecumenistic Orthodoxy. A few words of his Truth would have had much greater effect than all the religious conference circuit speakers, for ever making compromises with heterodoxy, giving their audiences to hear only what they want to hear.

In the translation that follows, I think that readers will find the answer to the question as to why so few English people have become Orthodox and what they must do in order to receive authentic Orthodoxy, to cease crashing on the rocks around Holy Orthodoxy and making up fictitious fantasies of surrogate Orthodoxy on the fringes of the Church. The solution is simple. Receive the fullness of Orthodoxy as it is and stop compromising with Orthodoxy, as it suits your comfort and convenience. Do not come to the Church with your own fantasy agendas. Learn, stop imposing your rationalistic imaginations and start feeling Orthodoxy and so living it. Either accept the real thing or else remain Anglicans: what do you put first – the Church of God or your nationalistic Anglican ethos? Half-measures and bridge figures will simply not do. If Anglicans can do this, they will not only at last begin to understand the 50%+ of us English people who have never had any connections with Anglicanism

in our lifetimes, but above all they will also begin to understand the Orthodox Church.

Here follow Fr Constantine's thoughts

'In order to grasp the nature of Anglicanism, we must realise that the Anglican consciousness is peculiar. It evolved under the influence of many centuries of island separation from the rest of the world, which, however, did not prevent it from developing an ever closer mutual relationship with that world. The basic character of the country shielded England from sudden invasions of warlike neighbours and created conditions such that England was able to evolve into a great power without administrative centralisation, without an enormous bureaucracy, without a standing army. Everything was held together by an ever more disciplined social consciousness, trained to find a solution to any difficulty through compromise. Compromise is the essence of English social life. This is not some corrupt opportunistic compromise, but a healthy agreement dependent on a high average level of social morals, a persistent and sustained efficiency and a robust Christian consciousness.

'Self-control – this is the compulsory quality of every true Englishman, which is inseparable from the sense of his own dignity. Once, in conversation with the wife of an Englishman, I happened to put forward the opinion about a mutual acquaintance, also an Englishman, that he was nervous. I suddenly heard the following retort: "It's a good job he's not here, or else he would have taken off his jacket, rolled up his sleeves and told you: 'Let's see, who's nervous here!'" Apparently, to call someone nervous is an insult for the typical Englishman. Self-control, supported by a strong social consciousness, filled with moral strength and penetrated by respect for others, creates conditions in which life is able to move forwards by itself. English law was itself created through the process of third parties sorting out arguments, based on generally acknowledged principles of human cohesion.

'In everyday life, the English are used to showing a tireless and imperturbable insistence on attaining self-set aims at the same time as a readiness to give ground even

at the last moment – but only to some extent! – so that matters do not break down in a definitive and highly detrimental way. In connection with this, there is a national habit of not setting yourself the task of convincing anyone of anything, or of looking for some middle path as part of a social verbal contest. It is simply a matter of weighing up the chances of success in a businesslike way, dictated not only by the actual strength of your adversary, but, above all, by the presence of the convictions and decisions formed by each party – and intuitively feeling your way towards a decision in conformity with the desires of the majority, which is also acceptable to the minority. The nation is a kind of huge club, made up of a multitude of intermediary clubs, working in an atmosphere of general conviction that the matter in question should remain in the hands of those who are purposely trained in it and who by tradition, inheritance and past success, can carry it through.

'An enormous sense of cohesiveness has accumulated over the generations – a cohesiveness which belongs both to the nation and to the group. This cohesiveness is so strong that the English are used to considering only their fellow-English as their own. At the same time the English respect and value above all else their homes, each in its absolute independence and individuality. Their respect for the homes of others is just as developed ... There is that which is general, which unites everybody – all their fellow-Englishmen, but separately! This peculiar Whole that has been created lives off the initiative of each individual and group, at times called to life and directed by the government, at times surging up and acting through their own initiative. This Whole has been able to seize almost half the world, but remains, with all the changes of historical growth and development, a unity higher than the type portrayed.

'This peculiar mindset has been carried over into ecclesiastical relations. And in this field the concept of compromise has been the very basis which presupposes some sort of general sense which unites everyone, penetrated not so much perhaps by Christian faith but by Christian morals. Respect for the independence of each home has remained

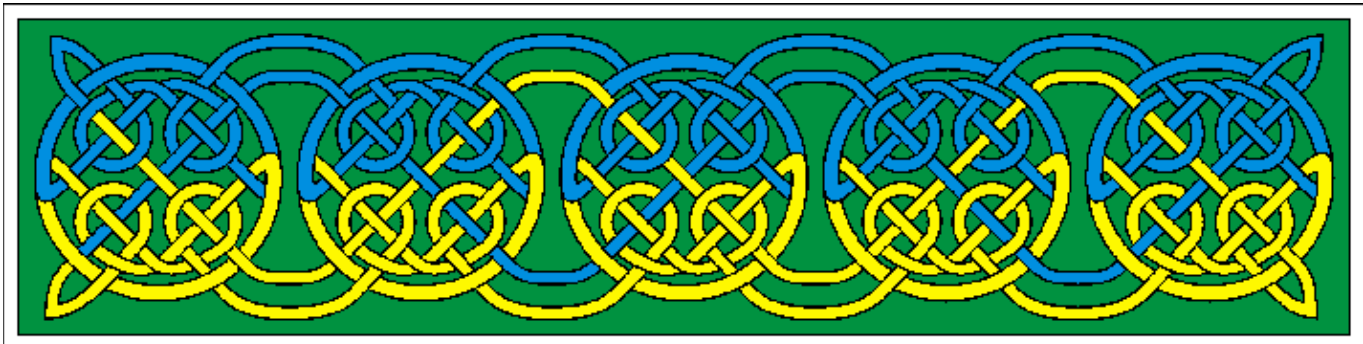
fundamental. As a result there has evolved something which in any other social and moral context would have been deformed into something completely ungainly and even cynical, but which in the context of the English Whole has become a mighty self-consciousness, a hopelessly limited spiritual horizon combined with an unbending firmness of social discipline, able to work wonders in the fields of social organisation, military success, culture, science, together with what is, given the above, always a slot which is set aside for religion, the religion which every individual thinks is best for himself.

'The typical Englishman is able to understand a great deal – but somewhere this understanding ends in hopelessness: he cannot cease to be an Englishman. This can be said: among themselves, true English people must always come to an agreement, even if with great difficulties, to which the true Englishman is accustomed. The English can never come to full agreement with the Non-English, since everything remains conditional and relative – it all depends on the requirements of the common interests of the English. If you carry this over into the sphere of faith, it is clear what an abyss opens up between the English view of the world and all others. The most basic thing that is characteristic for faith, namely the Absolute, is deliberately rejected in favour of the sense of true Englishness.

'Only by taking into account everything that has been said above can we understand all the contradictions in the attitudes of Anglicans who have such a friendly disposition towards Orthodoxy. We only very rarely encounter such a sympathetic and understanding, most sincere and even

adoring, view of our Orthodox way of life, and in individual cases, understanding even of our theology and worship. It would seem as if everything that is required for them to join the Orthodox Church is present. But no – it is not so simple! He is an Englishman: how can he tear himself away from his national ethos! The absolute for him is not the Faith, but his sense of Englishness ...

'At the present time, of course, much has changed and quite radically so. In particular, England too, as the Whole that we have depicted above, has decayed and it is even difficult to estimate the real extent of that decay. Idealism has to a large degree died out. On the other hand, of course, what previously was only a facade concealing a spiritual vacuum and what was called cant, has now grown far more important. Indeed, many no longer need to conceal themselves behind conventions: the masses have abandoned all forms of religion in England. But at the same time, as elsewhere, there is coming into being a certain healthy reaction in those whose souls are not yet dead. But here national tradition as described above is proving to be particularly pernicious, for it provokes an involuntary movement not towards the path of unity with authentic Orthodoxy, but with its forgery ... A special strength of faith is required if this tradition is to be overcome, defy the tide and steer a personal and authentic course by God's stars towards God's Sun. Only a few are doing this. And as regards what is happening in the hearts of the multitude, who swim with the 'ecumenical' tide, God alone knows ...'





## From The Holy Fathers: ST COLUMBA'S END AND TRANSFIGURATION

COLUMBA returned to his cell, where he spent the night sitting up on the bare stone, which served as his bed. He dictated his last command to his monks. 'Be at peace with one another. So long as you are at peace, the Lord will bless you and all your work'. Then he fell silent.

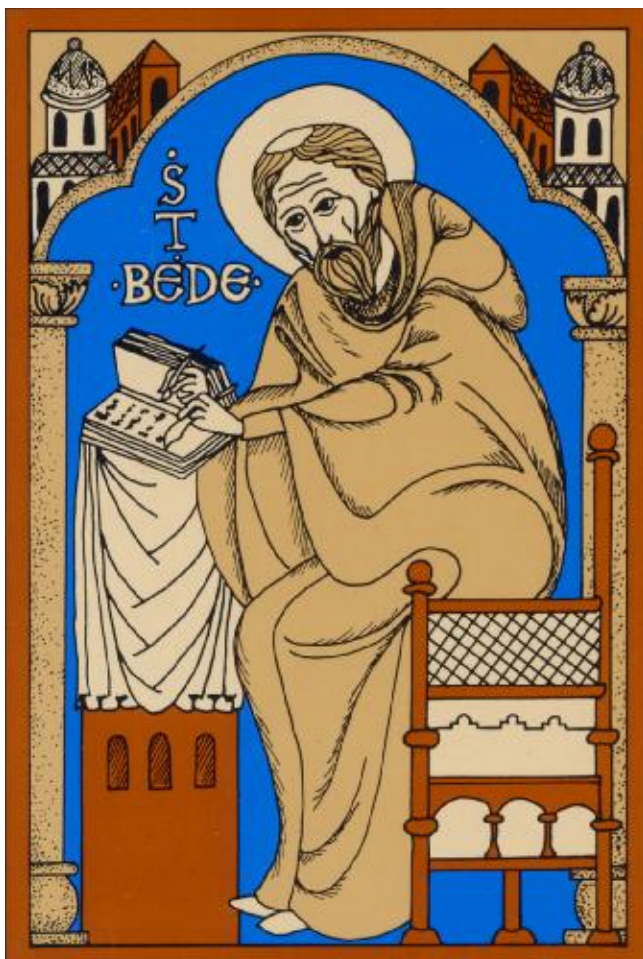
When the church bell tolled for midnight prayers, he rose up and hastened towards the church, arriving first. He went up to the altar and knelt down. As the other monks entered, they were astonished to see the whole church bathed in a soft, golden light coming forth from the altar.

As the monks reached the altar, Columba was overcome and collapsed. One of the monks laid Columba's head on his lap. Columba opened his eyes and looked round him. He saw all his monks weeping. His face broke into a joyful smile, and with a great effort he raised his right hand in order to bless them. Their tears stopped and they too smiled with joy, knowing that their beloved father would soon receive his eternal reward. Columba's hand then fell back onto his breast. His face now started to glow with joy, as he saw the angels coming to receive him into heaven. Then, filled with contentment, he breathed his last.

## THE SAINTS OF ENGLAND

### 5. Teachers of the Faith

THE flowering of art and literature becomes all the more remarkable when we consider how racked the country was by strife and faction



*St Bede the Venerable*



*The Causeway to Northey at Maldon as it is today – little changed since 991 when Lord Byrhtwold, Earl of East Anglia, led his men to defeat. The actual battle would have been fought behind the camera position. The sea-wall, on which the photographer is standing, is the only non-contemporaneous feature on the scene*

in the immediate post-pagan times. We may say that the work was accomplished in an atmosphere which made the calm concentration of the artist extremely difficult. On the other hand, great poets are seldom born in happy and heroic times. Thus



*St Edmund (Eadmund) of East Anglia*

it is that Providence illumines periods of darkness by bestowing on them divine inspiration.

Thus, St Bede's ears were disturbed by rougher sounds than mere billows beating on the rugged coast. Yet, he wrote all his life and wrote at ease apparently. The din of civil strife was almost continuous. Cornwall, for example, was finally subdued by King Athelstan only in the tenth century. With continual conflict with the Welsh, in 793 from the East and the deep sea came the Danes. These destroyed the most sacred shrines, sacked Cathedrals, polluted the altars and slew on sight all monastics. Two centuries later came the fatal field of Maldon, whereon perished many of the nobility of England. It was all very well to bribe the marauders with Danegeld, but there was precious little security and no one knew from day to day when or where the bolt would fall next. In 870 these pirates sacked the Convent of Coldingham and burned St Ebba the Younger and her community alive; they saved themselves from worse by mutilating their faces. Yet all the time the saints multiplied.

Indeed, they multiplied thanks to the Danes, as appears from the story of St Edmund's martyrdom, to give but one instance. According to this story, it seems that a certain Danish prince, going a-hawking in a boat, was surprised by a storm, driven out to sea and cast on the English shore near

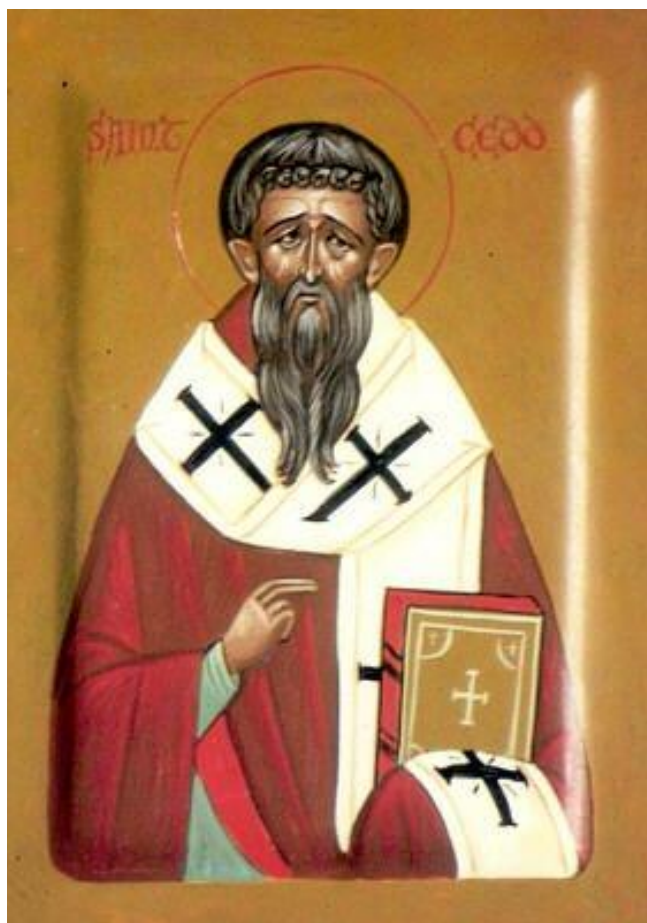
Yarmouth. He was seized and brought to the court of King Edmund who, finding him an excellent man, was about to make him chief falconer. The man, however, who actually held that office, in a fit of jealousy, decoyed the Danish prince into a wood and slew him. It was the faithfulness of the murdered man's dog that revealed the crime. For days on end the animal came to the palace for food and then disappeared into the woods. At last it was followed and found crouching by the corpse of his master.

The falconer was tried, found guilty and condemned to be set adrift in the very boat in which his victim had been cast away at Yarmouth. Strangely, thanks to the wind, he was carried to the Danish coast. He was arrested and, on being questioned regarding the fate of him in whose boat he was found, stated that he had been murdered on King Edmund's order. This brought the Danes in great numbers to England. A battle was fought at Thetford and won by the invaders. Edmund fell into their hands and was put to death, being set up as a target, shot through with arrows and then beheaded.

Into the bargain, as surely as Dane and Briton left them alone for a spell, the English started to fly at one another's throats. St Bede and other impartial spokesmen bluntly declare that life and property, both sacred and profane, suffered every bit as grievously from rival English princes as from Welsh legitimists or Danes from overseas. The Seven English Kingdoms, known by scholars as the Heptarchy, did not work. This civil strife embittered relations, even religious ones. When St Oswald, who had subdued Mercia, was killed, his Queen wished him to be buried at Bardney in Lincolnshire. But at Bardney they would have none of it. The body arrived in a chariot, but it had to remain outside in the cold all night. 'He was a saint, no doubt', they declared, 'but he is not of our country and, besides, he conquered us by force; therefore you can take him to Jericho'.

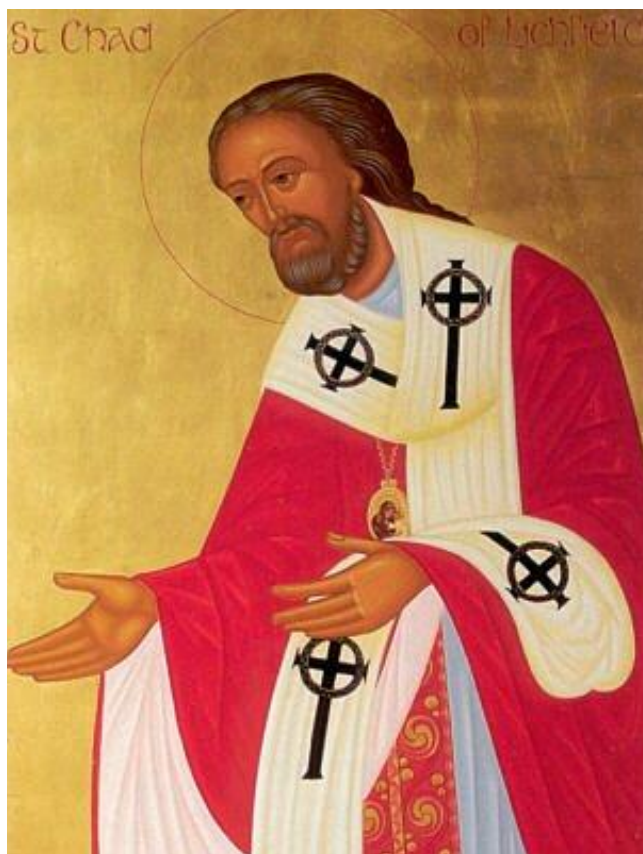
That this turbulent life appealed to the age appears from the names that parents gave their children. These names are all nicknames, or by-names, indicative of some physical or moral quality. Christian names appeared only gradually. And so we have Æthelwulf, the noble wolf; Eadwulf, the wolf of the province; Bertulf, the illustrious wolf; Humbert, the illustrious hound; Sigwulf, the wolf of victory; Brunhild, breast-plated battle-maid; Walthen, powerful warrior, and so on. Names indicative of a person's trade, profession or





*Above & right: The Holy Brothers Cedd and Chad (Cead)*

*Below: St Hilda (Hild) of Whitby*



dwelling-place they had very little use for. Earl Siward is a good all-round example of men of the time. When the end came, he thought it disgraceful to die in bed 'like a cow in a byre', to use his own comparison. With the help of the nurses and male attendants he donned his armour and expired propped up, with his weapon in his hand. On the other hand, synod after synod decreed that churchmen must leave off bearing arms; but they were a time about it, for the simple reason that the early English regarded a weapon of some kind as a mark of nobility. Such were the hangovers of paganism.

We should also recall that it was not under a blue and radiant sky that Sts Cuthbert and Hilda were nurtured, but amid the austerity of a rugged countryside, with nature everywhere untamed, amid cold mists and cheerless winter nights, hemmed in by vast forests, fens and marshes, and menaced by the cruelty of the sea. The earliest poems of our literature, born at this period, speak uniformly of stress and struggle, of raging waters and a frost-bitten unsympathetic countryside. The sea whose ruthlessness is described at the time was that of the Northumbrian coast, where shipwrecks were the order of the day.

The Celtic monks of Lindisfarne vied with their English brethren in their efforts to master it. We



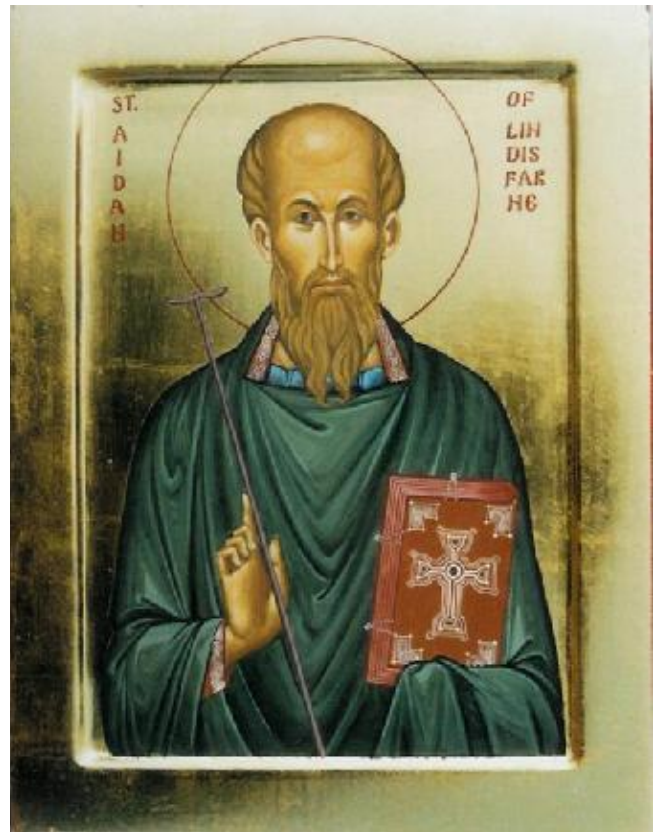
hear of their enterprise and courageous management as they coasted to and fro, defying the worst the elements might do to their frail barks. But the sea was a difficult beast to tame, and they met with only partial success. The original name of Whitby, where St Hilda lived, was Streoneshalh or Beacon Isle, and some think that it was so named because of the lighthouse which she set up there out of her great pity for the unfortunate sailors.

A letter written to St Boniface by a nun of either Hartlepool or Whitby is full of images which speak for themselves. 'When the foamy and stormy waves of the sea break against the rocks, as the breath of the furious winds has roused the ocean, and the keels of the boats are seen in the air with their masts under water, so the vessel of my soul is driven about by sorrow and calamities'. St Cuthbert, who must have had a constitution of iron until sickness undermined it, feared neither man nor demon, but feared those winds. His cave at Farne was shuttered from the blast by an ox hide, which he moved according to the direction of the gale.

At that time a large proportion of our countryside was tree-covered. The chronicle says that the entire territory between Tyne and the Tees was 'solitary forest'. The one that the English drove the defeated Britons into was one hundred twenty miles long and thirty miles broad. Andredswold was its name. Wold and Weald are equivalents of wood and their prevalence even now among our place-names reveals the bygone state of affairs. Woodstock also is fairly common.

In the North, where Sts Hilda, Bede and so many more lived, the moor fought the forest for possession – the moor whose unfriendliness and treachery have abated little in a thousand years. And keen winds blew across great swamps with the germs of pestilence, not rare in those days, any more than famine. Plague very nearly carried off St Cuthbert himself, and he only a novice at the time. It was the same plague that killed his beloved St Boswell (Boisil) of Melrose. Another visitation swept away St Cedd, the Bishop of London and Apostle of Essex, and his thirty companions, together with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primate of Northumbria.

St Cedd was he who acted as interpreter between the disputants at the Synod of Whitby. He had been a monk at Lindisfarne and he reposed at Lastingham. The thirty who shared his destiny had hastened to his side the moment they heard of his seizure, but they caught the contagion and



*St Aidan of Lindisfarne*

followed their master before the week was out. His brother St Chad was also one of the victims of the pestilence of 673. Thirteen years later another came and swept the Jarrow monastery clean or nearly so. None was left to recite the antiphons and responses except the Abbot and one small boy-monk, probably Bede; and, these two kept things going until better times. As for the clergy, Archbishop Theodore's Penitential stresses the duty laid upon them of visiting the plague-stricken members of the flock.

The famines were every bit as chronic and as obstinate as the plagues. All sorts of reasons are assigned for this, backward methods of tilling, lack of transport and so on. But these things not so easily accounted for as all that. There is no 'reason' for any famine, or is there? At any rate, our forefathers regarded these visitations as acts of God. This state of affairs is in itself a sort of scourge, a spiritual famine. St Bede describes a drought in the South, which lasted three years and drove some to despair. In the ninth century there was a famine which 'scoured the hills'. Twelve months after there was another, 'severe beyond remembrance'. In 1040 things were so bad that the price of wheat was prohibitive; while in 1044, 'there was wild hunger everywhere and corn so dear that no man ever heard tell of the like'.

No wonder the early English instituted thanksgiving to God for the first fruits of the earth every August. In those days, they ploughed in January, sowed in March, cut the corn in June and the barley in August. The first of the latter month was appointed for a service of thanksgiving, when the Hlaf-Mæsse was celebrated. This hlaf was bread, our loaf; a lady was a hlaf-dige, or bread-kneader; a lord was a hlaf-weard, or bread-guard. Later Hlaf-Mæsse became Lammas, Lammas-tide being the season of the harvest thanksgiving. The custom did not begin with the English, for it was a recognized feast of the Orthodox faith very early on. In the East and in Italy the first of August meant a solemn procession followed by the blessing of the new grapes, later, as today, it was combined with Feast of the Transfiguration on 6 August.

## 6. Love thy Neighbour

A contemporary monk describes St Guthlac as, 'a treasure of wisdom who had in his mind naught but peace and love and pity; nor did any ever see him angry. Sweetness was in his temper'. And this sweetness was also in the temper of St Werburgh of Chester. She was accessible to all in trouble, the records say, but she was especially gracious to children and women. These turned to her as to a neighbour, to one who shared all the difficulties of their own precarious existence.

Once, on Easter Day, when St Oswald was at dinner in the great hall of his palace, the butler came to say that a crowd of hungry people had gathered before the gate. The king sent a huge platter loaded with food from his own table. St Aidan, who was present, seized the king's right hand and said: 'May this arm never know corruption'. The prediction was verified, and for long the relic was venerated at Peterborough. On his way to Rome, St Dunstan carried almsgiving so far that he and his suite were left penniless and had themselves to turn into beggars. St Oswald, Archbishop of York, died in the act of washing the feet of the poor: and the diseased were cured by merely touching the litter of St Erconwald.

St Benno rebuked the frogs for croaking and he trying to say his prayers. But then he thought of the text of Holy Writ: 'All ye that move in the waters, bless the Lord'. And so he changed his mind and bade the frogs croak away to their heart's content since, for all he knew, their hymn of praise might be as pleasing to God as his own. St Werburgh, however, did not change her mind. Hearing complaints of the damage the wild geese were



*St Cuthbert*

doing to the harvest in Northamptonshire, she bade them pack up and be off for good. St Werburgh left the geese no room for repentance. Not so St Cuthbert. When he was on the island of Farne, he found the ravens doing so much harm to his barley field that he banished them. Later they came back, and with such manifest signs of contrition that he blessed them and told them to remain.

St Edith of Wilton dressed the sores of the sick and 'loved the poor as though they were her own children'. We read of St Bimstan, the tenth-century Bishop of Winchester, and how he washed the feet of the poor and refreshed them at his table. St Edbert, St Cuthbert's successor in the See of Lindisfarne, had a reputation of the same kind; indeed, this practice meets us everywhere in his life. He set aside one tenth of his goods in favour of the needy.

As bishop, St Cuthbert journeyed tirelessly through his vast diocese, penetrating into every corner and bringing food and medicine to the places where they were most needed. Those within reach of his monasteries had free access to the monks who were skilled in healing. Practitioners of this kind were to be found in all the communities. Thus we read in St Wilfrid's Life how, when a young novice fell from a tower

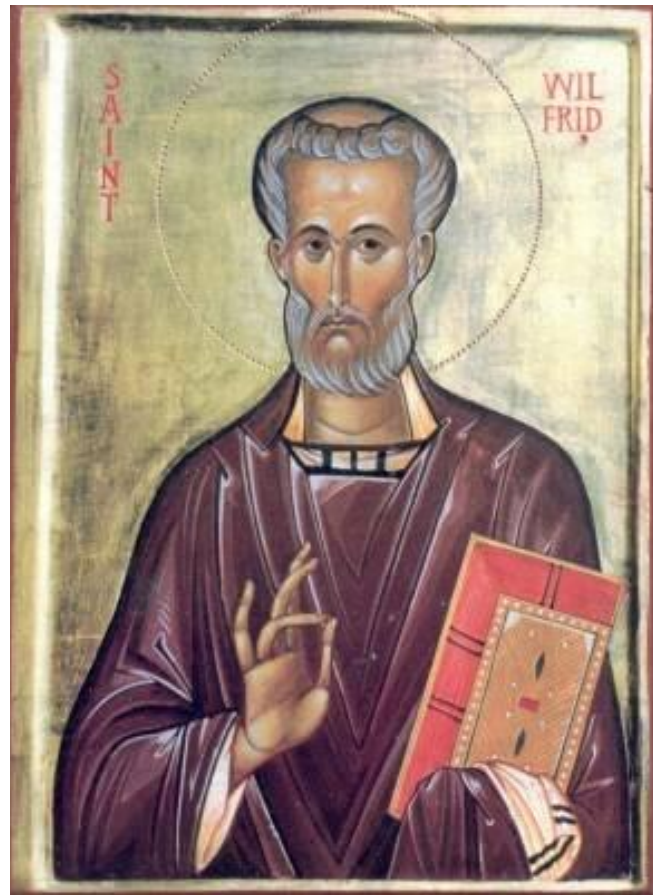


fracturing his arms and legs, the monastic doctors were busy with their splints and bandages while the Saint prayed. The youth got better, and so the honours were even between temporal skill and the heavenly. For a time St Cuthbert was steward at Ripon. In the depths of winter when famished travellers knocked at the door, he would wash their feet and warm them. After this he would go down to the kitchen and supervise the preparation of their food.

Once it happened that the wife of a certain noble was taken with madness. The distracted husband saddled his horse and went off to get St Cuthbert's assistance. On the way, however, shame got the better of his common sense and he resolved to conceal the nature of the illness from the Saint. 'My wife', he said on arrival, 'has had a seizure of some kind. Will you send a priest along to give her the sacrament?' 'No', replied St Cuthbert, 'this is my business. Come along, we shall return together'. On the way back, seeing the other's tears, the Saint guessed the truth. 'Why, man: these brainstorms are no different from any other disease. You have nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, when we arrive we shall find that she is in her right senses'. And so she was.



*St Alphege (Ælfheah)*



*St Wilfrid*

St Cuthbert narrowly escaped being carried off by pestilence, that chronic scourge of early England. He just managed to pull through, although the visitation left its mark and shortened his days. But, after that, he exerted himself to the utmost, fearlessly visiting stricken homes. It was on one such expedition that he kissed the dying child before healing it, after which he prophesied that the baby would be the last to be afflicted in that place. And so it turned out. 'Rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with those that weep', was his motto. In hearing confessions he shed most of the tears and he usually took the greater portion of the penance on himself.

After his repose, he came to be called on chiefly by stricken sailors. As late as the twelfth century, these report that he had been seen riding the storms off the northern coasts and quelling wind and waves with his voice. St Cuthbert's extraordinary popularity in the North was due, in great part, to the fact that working folk knew that he was on their side; and, better still, was one of them. They never wearied of listening to praises, read by a travelling scholar or sung by a minstrel, one who had been a shepherd and a sailor by turn, who always shared the privations and hardships of their

own life and never coveted anything possessed by another. Sailors and criminals alike glorified St Cuthbert. His sanctuary at Lindisfarne and then at Durham were among the most revered in all England. The fugitive from justice had only to take hold of the bronze ring of the door and he or she was safe.

In centuries after, those of Norman oppression, what went on at Lindisfarne and Durham caused St Cuthbert to be looked up to as the defender of all those oppressed by feudal tyranny. They looked up to St Wilfrid as well. The whole enclosure of his monastery at Hexham was inviolate, not only as a shelter for fugitives from punishment, but also as a refuge, in time of war, for non-combatants, women, children and even cattle. This was so respected that even the cruellest of invaders never dared play with it.

With saints like Sts Dunstan and Cuthbert at the helm, it is not surprising to find the Church exerting itself to the utmost in the effort to redress grievances and create a healthy social conscience. Each bishop was charged to watch over the rights of the poor as though they were his own. Besides, either in his own person or in that of his archdeacon, he attended the shire-moots or chief courts, held twice a year, in order to see that justice was impartially administered. This custom lasted until the Conquest when the legalists from France, William's props and supporters, were able to show that it was against canon law, and so it was discontinued.

When people fasted they were to give the poor the food and drink thus saved. One decree informs the giver of alms that he and she must do this not just to cover up their own sins or to save their own souls, but out of love for their fellow-creatures. One practice seems to have died out, that of exercising especial charity at funerals. This took the form of freeing many serfs, of giving a wedding dowry to some needy girl and so on. Always, on such occasions, the hungry were fed. In one instance, twelve hundred poor folk were given a loaf of bread, a piece of cheese and a silver penny. In time, as we know, this was to pass out into the hands of the State. It would be interesting to have a list compiled of such services taken over in this way; it would be a long list.

An early English work that has come down to us gives a summary of a bishop's duties, some of which are as follows: 'In the first place his prayers; then his book work and his church hours at night times; next, the washing of the feet of the poor and

the dealing out of alms. Also, good handicrafts befit him, for Paul himself so worked'. This distribution of alms was sometimes an everyday duty; St Birnstan of Worcester never neglected it when at home, nor yet the serving of the poor at table. Each day in Lent St Oswald the Archbishop washed, dried and kissed the feet of twelve poor folk, and gave each a silver penny. When Easter came they were given a new set of clothes and entertained for a whole week at his palace. 'St Swithin feasted with the poor and not with the rich,' says his Life. When St Wilfrid was labouring to convert obstinate folk, a famine raged among them for three years. It was his prayers that brought the rain at last, but meanwhile he taught the people how to fish. He taught them well, too, after one lesson they caught three hundred.

When St Botolph founded his monastery at Iken in Suffolk, he would not allow the owners of the land to be dispossessed. St Alphege, the martyred Archbishop of Canterbury, was put to death by the Danes simply because he rejected the terms of a ransom which would have further impoverished his poor people. He was an eyewitness of the massacre at Canterbury and sharply rebuked its perpetrators who promptly threw him into prison. That night, however, the Danish army to a man went down with dysentery, and so the Archbishop was set free. Thereupon, he healed the soldiers one by one with blessed bread. Then came the ransom proposals. On refusing, he was taken to Greenwich and stoned, finally his skull was cloven with an axe. He was buried in St Paul's. The relics were later conveyed by water to Canterbury, the king holding the stern of the boat at the embarkation.

The Penitentiary of Archbishop Theodore sets out in detail regulations designed to prevent farm-workers, smallholders, vinedressers, seamstresses, spinners and even charwomen from being exploited by masters and landlords. The severe penances imposed for this type of social injustice were, for the most part, so framed as to constitute a compensation or investment in favour of the exploited. Thus the culprit was obliged to build a bridge where it was most needed, to repair a road or make one, to build cottages for the poor, to free so many serfs, and so on. Church and State enforced the Sunday observance, which must have been a great boon to all working people.

And we have to bear in mind that there were some thirty-eight other days besides, on which work was suspended, or very nearly so, as we see from legislation passed in King Alfred's reign.



Christmas meant a fortnight's holiday, Easter and the Dormition of Our Lady a week. Then, and for long after, the English people took this law very seriously, as they had before. For example, when Egfrid had been slain in battle, St Cuthbert broke the news to the queen and advised her to fly to safety. But he obliged her to wait until Monday morning, since it was unlawful to use a wheeled vehicle on a day of rest. No lawsuits might be engaged in between the first Sunday of Advent and the leavetaking of Theophany, between the third Sunday before Lent and Thomas Sunday and between Ascension and Pentecost, called Whitsun, 'White Sunday'. On the great feasts, it was forbidden to make arrests. Besides, all sorts of attempts were made to soften the severity of warfare and to wean the ruling class from their addiction to it.

Most of the population was made up of ceorls and thanes, the thanes being the gentry and the ceorls the ordinary middle and lower classes, who evolved into the English yeomanry. Property determined their status and political rights. Those who were not owners had no voice in the management of affairs, a social situation that was destined to last for a very long time. However, any ceorl could become a thane. Later on, every priest was a thane, just as every bishop sat as an advisor in the Witan or Parliament.

Slavery was one of the biggest obstacles that the monks encountered in their task of converting the

North. The serfs were recruited from the descendants of those whom the Roman invaders had enslaved, or they might be prisoners of war or just ordinary convicts. But they were not in a state of abject servitude. If they could not leave their master, the master was not allowed to turn them adrift. They were tied to the soil, it is true, but the soil was tied to them and quite as tightly. In due course slave-trading was forbidden by law; but, as usual, law or no law, the thing went on, although very few bought and sold slaves were kept in the country.

How easily it was for anyone find himself or herself enslaved in early times appears from the extraordinary story of Bathilde, an English princess or noble lady. She had gone out for a walk on the shore, some pirates spied her and swooped down on the deserted beach. The next thing is that Bathilde found herself on the other side of the channel, a slave at the Merovingian Court. She was a beautiful woman and eventually Clovis II married her. She became the mother of his successors, and on her husband's death was appointed regent of the kingdom. She ended up in a convent, but both as queen and as nun she was acclaimed Mother of the Poor. Equally, in the eighth century, during his whole life, St Boniface strove to check this ingrained pagan tendency to enslave others

*... to be continued*

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## COLCHESTER: AN ORTHODOX HERITAGE

Britain, you are indeed fortunate and now more blessed than any other land, since you were the first to see Constantine as Emperor.

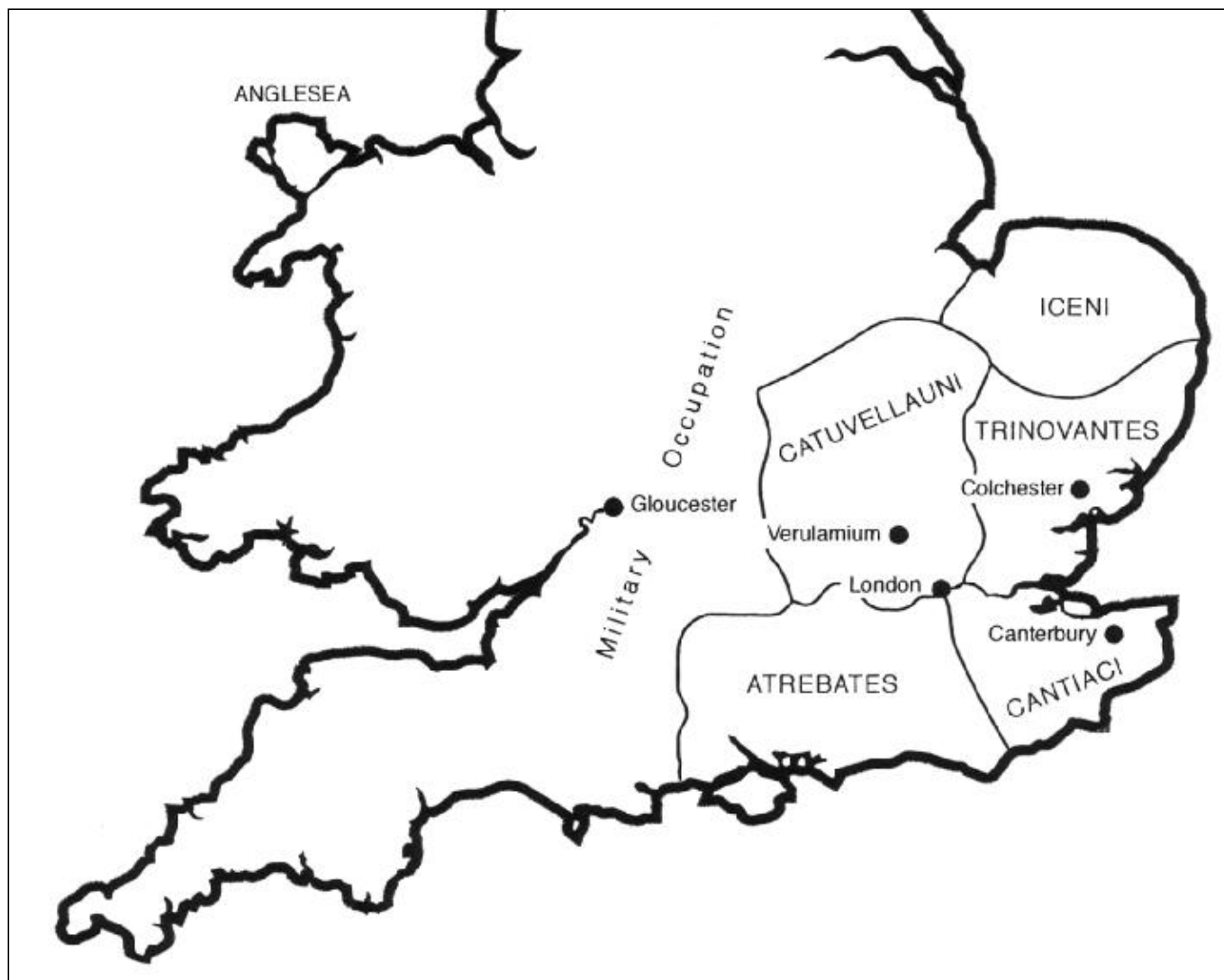
*From a Latin Panegyric proclaimed in 310*

**C**OLCHESTER, situated 52 miles to the north-east of London, is known as 'Britain's oldest recorded town'. Indeed, it was first mentioned on a Celtic coin dated to the equivalent of c. 10bc and later by Pliny the Elder in AD 77. It was then known as Camulodunon, meaning 'the fortress of Camulos', the Celtic god of war.

Its military destiny had been decided from the Iron Age, no doubt because of its geographical situation as a route centre where trackways from London and St Albans met. It was surrounded by earthworks on one side and on three sides by what are now called the River Colne and its tributary, the

Roman River. Camulodunon, covering some 12 square miles and with its large protective ditches, some of which still exist, acted as the capital for the Catuvellauni, the strongest Celtic tribe in Britain. Its name of Camulodunon may indeed be the origin of the Celtic 'Camelot' of Arthurian legend.

This Iron Age fortress was located in the territory of the Trinovantes tribe, who lived in what is now Essex and south Suffolk. Their leader, Cunobelin (called Cymbeline by Shakespeare), had for years traded with the Roman Empire in Gaul. He died in about AD 43, but his three sons were not to have the same relations with the Romans. One was pro-Roman and considered to be a traitor by his father, another was to be killed in battle against the Romans, leaving only the third son, the legendary Caractacus.



*Map of Roman Britain in c. AD 60, showing the tribal divisions*

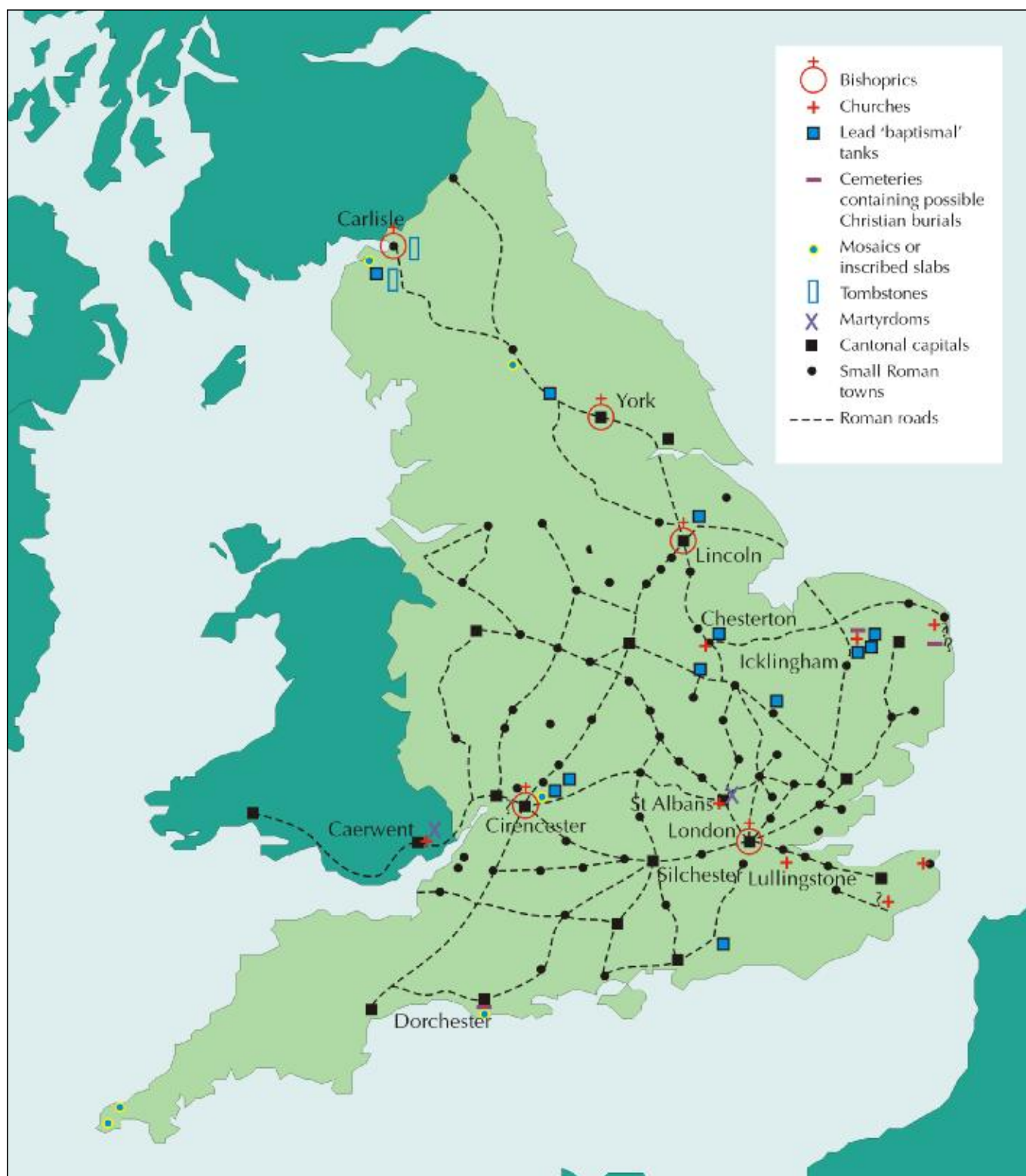
It was from Gaul, precisely from Boulogne, that in AD 43 the Roman invasion of Britain was launched by the 40,000-strong Roman army under the Emperor Claudius. The XX Legion led the four invading legions from Kent straight to Camulodunon, which they swiftly conquered, as it was considered to be the capital of Britain. They are said to have arrived there with elephants, which must have been very frightening for the native Britons.

The Romans built a fortress to the east of the Celtic Camulodunon, on a promontory overlooking the River Colne – the site of modern Colchester. This legion soon discharged numbers of its soldiers and so in AD 49 Camulodunon, as the Romans called it, was no longer only a garrison, but had become the first Roman town in Britain. This place of settlement of some 2,000 retired legionaries was called in Latin a 'colonia' or colony. Indeed, 'Colonia' became the official name

of Camulodunon, like Köln/Cologne in Germany, also a Roman 'Colonia'.

In the first years, 'Colonia' was very much the capital of Roman Britain. The Temple of the Imperial Cult, dedicated to the Emperor Claudius, conqueror of the British Province, was built in Colonia on his death in c. AD 54, together with a theatre, a council chamber and statues of Victory. Built on a heroic scale, this Temple even excited comment in Rome. The Celtic leaders of the province met in Roman-sponsored unity in their ancient capital for many years after their defeat, symbolically gathering around the Temple dedicated to their subjugator, the emperor-god Claudius.

However, this first Temple was soon swept away by Boudica, Queen of the Iceni. The Iceni were the tribe of the northern half of East Anglia and revolted against Roman brutality and greed in AD 60. After this, the capital of the Roman province



### *Christian objects in Roman Britain*

*The map shows, in the main, the non-movable objects which testify to some permanency of Christian belief or occupancy*

was transferred, for already in c. AD 50 Roman engineers had built a bridge at Londinium (London). The construction of the first bridge at this strategic crossing point over the Thames, linking what is now central and southern England, made London what it still is today, the capital.

Nevertheless, Camulodunum never lost its importance. It was to remain one of the five most important towns in the province, after London and York and the two other 'coloniae' of Lincoln and Gloucester. Protecting walls, some eighteen feet high and nearly two miles long, were built around



*The Engisc (Anglo-Saxon) tower of Holy Trinity church, which still survives in Colchester, although unfortunately it is not now used for its original purpose.*

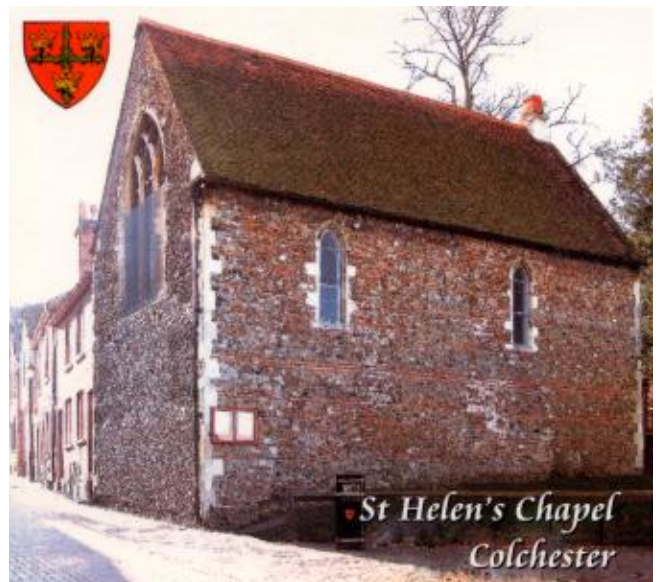
it in the late first and early second century, thus marking its importance. In 306 Constantine, later the Saint, was proclaimed Emperor in York. This fact supports the tradition that his mother, St Helena, wife of Constantius, later finder of the True Cross, had walked the streets of Britain, notably of Colchester. This is possible, as also is the story that she erected a chapel dedicated to St John in Camulodunum.

According to a twelfth-century legend St Helena and her son Constantine were both even born here, and she was the daughter of the mythical 'King Cole' of nursery rhyme fame. We shall pass over this legend, although it is a good reason for particularly venerating her locally. Certainly, St Helena remains the patron-saint of Colchester, with the Cross appearing on Colchester's crest and her statue holding the Cross and facing Jerusalem atop Colchester's town-hall. Interestingly, a tiny mediæval chapel, much restored by the Victorians but actually built in a corner of the site of the Roman theatre, is currently on loan to the Greek Orthodox community in Colchester.



*The earliest version of the Colchester's coat of arms appears on the decorated initial H of the 1413 charter issued to the town by Henry V. St Helena is shown with the cross which her son, Constantine the Great, grasps. Below left is the coat of arms, consisting of a cross miraculously bursting into life and sustaining three crowns*

In 314 three British bishops, from York, London and possibly also Colchester attended a Church Council in Arles in Gaul. In 359 other bishops from Britain attended another Council in Rimini in Italy. Thirty years ago archaeologists uncovered the foundations of a Roman church, perhaps that of this bishop. These foundations, still uncovered, are





located in the centre of Colchester only a few hundred yards from the new St John's Orthodox Church. It was built between 320 and 340 and was used until well after 400.

Camulodunum was gradually abandoned by the Romans between about 410 and 450, when it was taken over by the pagan English and renamed Colchester. This means the Roman garrison (castra/chester) which had been a Roman settlement ('colonia'). These English East Saxon people were evangelised only in the seventh century, their Apostle being St Cedd. These first Christian English, joined by the bonds of a common faith with the rest of worldwide Orthodox Christendom, east and west, built a church alongside the then ruinous Colchester Castle. Remains of its elaborate wall-paintings have been found.

At that time there were churches dedicated to the Holy Trinity, the Mother of God, All Saints, St John, perhaps St James, St Helena, St Nicholas, St Martin, and the local saints St Botolph and St Rumwold (Runwald). This makes ten churches for a population of between 1,000 and 2,000. Of later remains of Christian Orthodox interest, we must recall the tower of the Holy Trinity church

with its Roman brick. This tower is in excellent condition and dates back to the late tenth or early eleventh century, making it 1,000 years old. It could have been erected on the site of a wooden church constructed by the Christian King Edward the Elder (899-924), son of Alfred the Great, who refortified Colchester's Roman walls in 917 against the pagan Danes.

Today, Colchester is still overshadowed by its Roman past. Large sections of the Roman walls survive, in parts to a considerable height, and the Roman street pattern remains in part. The much-rebuilt Norman Colchester Castle, now the museum, is partly built of Roman brick on the vaults of Claudius' Roman temple. And there is also the witness of the foundations of a fourth-century church, that of the 1,000 year-old tower of Holy Trinity church, the mediæval St Helena's chapel and our own St John's Orthodox Church, all reconnecting present-day Colchester with the values of its spiritual heritage of Early Christianity.

## ST JOHN'S ORTHODOX CHURCH IN COLCHESTER

'The Church that was built during an anti-Orthodox war has now become an Orthodox Church. Some would call this irony - others poetic justice.

We would call it a spiritual victory'.

### Introduction

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.

*Tertullian AD 197*

**O**VER thirty years ago now an elderly priest told me, then a layman, that when a new church opened, it was necessary to pray hard, celebrate the services as carefully as possible and expect nothing to happen for the first ten years. Just as a seed planted takes time to grow into a small tree, so the seed of a church takes time to grow. I thought that sensible and sober advice at the time, but did not think that one day I would be living those exact words as a prophecy.



*An early photograph of soldiers leaving the Garrison Church*

Almost to the day, after exactly ten years of prayer and struggle, sweat and tears in Felixstowe, our efforts were rewarded with the ordination of a deacon in our little church. Within a few more months, more doors opened, giving us the opportunity to set up a permanent church in the town of Colchester, the first Capital of Britain before London, in a church built over 150 years previously for the anti-Orthodox Crimean War.

### History

'The Russian people are an Orthodox Christian people, who form a Christian Empire. As is shown by Providence, this Empire has a universal calling, the calling to preserve and spread the holy truth of Orthodoxy ... If our people perish, the Church will be shaken and therefore the world and mankind will be shaken and the truth will be belittled ... to serve the people in this sense means to serve God, Christ, the

Church, the truth, Orthodoxy, the salvation of the world and mankind.'

*New Hieromartyr John (Vostorgov) († 1918), Full Collected Works, Vol IV, p. 506*

Today, most historians have concluded that the 'Crimean' War (1853–1856) was quite unnecessary, 'a mistake' and 'a failure', and the deaths it caused were futile<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, it has often been seen as the classic example of why wars should not be fought. During the War conditions in the British Army were so appalling that the government had to recruit foreign mercenaries, above all in Germany. The 'German Legion', numbering 5,000 men, came to Colchester, a national front-line military base since the Napoleonic invasion scare. Colchester was re-established as the country's largest garrison town.

A company in Lowestoft in Suffolk built a large Garrison Church for this German Legion. This was designed in the same way as three other buildings, one of them Felixstowe Railway Station, part of which still stands, and two other garrison churches, both of which have now disappeared. The Church



*The former Garrison Church, now St John's Orthodox Church*

was completed in January 1856 on the burial ground of St Botolph's church, where between 1807 and 1812 at least 564 military burials had been made.

According to the local historian, Mr J. Phillips, writing in the Essex Country Telegraph on 8 May 1909, the Church was never dedicated to a saint. The Garrison Church closed in March 2007, after the Garrison had begun its move to new quarters outside Colchester and also to a new church, appropriately dedicated to St Alban the Martyr. David Phillips, of planners Andrew Martin Associates, said of the new garrison: 'It is going to be a new site for the garrison of the 21st century. It is a consolidation of the garrison and meets the changing requirements of the Army'.

Colonel Tony Phillips, Deputy Garrison Commander, promised that the Church would not be demolished, but insisted that alternative uses be found for it. He was backed up by the present Colchester town historian, Andrew Phillips, John Phillips, in charge of the Church for the developer, Taylor Wimpey, and supported by Lord Andrew Phillips of Sudbury, Chancellor of Essex University in Colchester. (Readers with a suspicious mind should note that none of these members of the Phillips clan are close relatives; it is simply that Phillips is a very common name on the Essex-Suffolk border. This does probably go back to a common, but very distant, ancestor in the area).

By the grace of God, through the prayers of St John and thanks to the financial support of readers of Orthodox England, it is our Church that managed to purchase the former Garrison Church. The Church that was built during an anti-Orthodox war has now become an Orthodox Church. Some would call this irony, others poetic justice. We would call it a spiritual victory.

### The Church Today

'Holy Rus is the Third Rome, a fourth there will not be – it is the bulwark of the whole Orthodox Faith, the centre of all Orthodox thinking and the Orthodox confession of the truth. That is why Satan takes up such horrible arms against Rus.'

*Elder Zosima (Sokur), 15 June 1997*

Our Church covers an area of 632 square metres and has two side-chapels and a separate meeting hall, altogether providing another 203 square metres. The main Church is dedicated to

St John of Shanghai, Archbishop in London, thus transferring the dedication of the former, temporarily rented Felixstowe premises. As for the chapel on the south side, this is dedicated to All the Saints Who Shone Forth in the Isles, of which dedication, we believe, St John would have approved.

The iconostasis of the main church shows, from north to south, that is, from left to right, mainly twentieth-century saints, from least recent to most recent. These are in the icons of: St Innocent of Alaska, Apostle to the Americas (✙ 1879), the Optina Elders (✙ 1829–1923, culminating in Elder Ambrose ✙ 1891), the Royal Martyrs (✙ 1918), St Tikhon of Moscow (✙ 1925), and on the right-hand side, St John of Shanghai (✙ 1966), St Nicholas of Zhicha (✙ 1956), St Alexis of Carpatho-Russia (✙ 1947), and St Nicholas of Tokyo (✙ 1912).

Like many saints, these saints are interrelated, forming one holy family. Thus, St Innocent of Alaska, whose see later moved to San Francisco, became Metropolitan of Moscow. St Tikhon, Bishop of San Francisco, also later became Patriarch of Moscow. In San Francisco St Tikhon was responsible for having Orthodox services translated into English and later became the founder of the self-governing Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, to which the church in Colchester belongs. St John of Shanghai was a disciple of Metropolitan Antony of Kiev, who was the first Metropolitan of the Church Outside Russia. Metropolitan Antony also worked tirelessly and successfully for the restoration of the Patriarchate of Moscow – its first representative being St Tikhon. St John, who at the end of his life was appointed Archbishop of San Francisco, was well-known to St Nicholas of Zhicha. As for St Alexis of Carpatho-Russia, he was another disciple of Metropolitan Antony of Kiev, lived in America under the Bishop of San Francisco and later worked with both St Nicholas of Zhicha and St John. St Alexis worked tirelessly for the restoration of Orthodoxy in the extreme west of the Russian lands, in what was Austro-Hungary and later became Czechoslovakia.

The saints of the iconostasis represent the worldwide spread of Russian Orthodoxy from the (left-hand side) Far West (St Innocent in Alaska) to the (right-hand side) Far East (St Nicholas in Japan). Interestingly, these two saints met in Siberia in 1860–61. The experienced missionary, then Archbishop Innocent, gave valuable advice to the inexperienced Hieromonk Nicholas who was on





*Icon of St John of Shanghai commissioned for the new iconostasis*

his way to Japan. In particular, the Archbishop impressed on the hieromonk the importance of translation of the New Testament and the liturgical books. St Nicholas of Tokyo also spoke excellent English, visited London in September 1879, after visiting Shanghai in 1871 and employed an English architect to build the Orthodox Cathedral in Tokyo. Both Shanghai and London link him with St John.

In this respect the Royal Martyrs also had close ties with England, where the martyred Emperor Nicholas and the two sisters, his spouse the Empress St Alexandra, and the Grand Duchess St Elizabeth, spent time. The latter, a large icon of whom is in the church, was among Queen Victoria's favourite grand-daughters. The catechism of the future Empress Alexandra began at Windsor Castle and the martyred Tsar is the great-uncle of Queen Elizabeth II. As regards the feat of all the New Martyrs and Confessors,

represented by the Royal Martyrs, it had been prepared by the great spiritual renewal of Orthodoxy in Russia in the nineteenth century, fostered among others by the Optina Elders.

As for St Seraphim of Vyritsa, whose icon is in the Church, he had been a very wealthy and righteous merchant who had done much business, especially in Germany, before becoming an Elder and repeating the feat of his patron, St Seraphim of Sarov, praying on a stone for a thousand days and nights. In the dark night of Stalinism in 1939, he prophesied the resurrection of Russia and the worldwide spread of Orthodoxy after the fall of Communism, saying that *Salvation will come from Russia*. These were also the words of the martyred Tsar Nicholas before his Golgotha and communion with God and Resurrection, when he said: *'Tell everyone ... that the evil that is in the world will grow even stronger, yet it is not evil that will win but love'*.

Other prophetic figures with large icons in our Church include St Seraphim of Sarov and St John of Kronstadt, who both prophesied the fall and restoration of Russia. In this way, these saints represent the restoration and spread of Holy Orthodoxy in Russia itself, to the Far East in Japan (St Nicholas of Tokyo), to the west in Carpatho-Russia (St Alexis), to the Far West in Alaska (St Innocent), and also now westwards to England (St John).

The restoration of Orthodoxy is marked by the icon in the chapel of the martyred King of East Anglia St Edmund († 869), whose presence in these Eastern Counties haunted my childhood. And on the chapel iconostasis there is also a large icon of St Alban († c. 305), the Protomartyr of Britain. This recalls to me the military associations of my native town, situated in the Roman road from St Albans, as does the address of our Church, in 'Military Road'. And in the main Church, there is of course a large icon of St Helena, the Patroness of Colchester, who may have walked the streets of Colchester seventeen centuries ago.

Our Church has another personal connection with the pre-Schism past of this country, for it is built on the burial ground of the church of the early English St Botolph of Iken († 680). He lived the monastic life to the north of Colchester in Suffolk. In Colchester the ruins of a twelfth-century monastery dedicated to him stand not far away from our Church today, next to St Botolph's town railway station. Hence, inside the chapel, dedicated to All the Saints Who have Shone Forth in the Isles, there is a large icon of St Botolph.



Here there are also large icons of St Felix, come from France to be the Apostle of East Anglia († 647), his spiritual daughter St Audrey († 679) and icons of the two great Essex saints, St Cedd, Apostle of Essex († 664) and St Osyth the Martyr († c. 700). Finally, the links of the Church with the Crimea remind me of my place of theological study, the St Sergius Institute in the Rue de Crimée in Paris and hence the icon of St Sergius inside.

### Conclusion

'If the Orthodoxy of the twenty-first century manages to recreate the Church of the first centuries of Christianity ... then its words will pour like life-giving rain across the face of the Russian land and inevitably they will also flow across its borders: to the East, to the West and to far distant islands – and it is in this that Russia's mission consists, according to the prophecies of the Holy Fathers and the great thinkers of our land.'

*Fr Sergiy Rybko, The Church of the Young,  
Tserkovny Vestnik, October 2007*

If I may end on a more personal note, our Church permanently recalls what I can only call a 'revelation'. This came to me in Colchester exactly forty years ago, in October 1968, about a mile from the Church. It is a revelation which has guided me and inspired me throughout the rest of my life, despite all those who falsely claimed to represent the Orthodox Church during the period of captivity of Russian Orthodoxy and tried to deter me.

The nature of this revelation was threefold. Firstly, it said that Russia's real destiny is messianic and that salvation will come through Her Church. Secondly, it said that beneath all the layers of falsity and lies in Western history, underneath it all, the identity and interests of the True West are also those of Holy Russia. Thirdly, it said that only the saints of the Church could be followed and those who did not follow the saints are not to be trusted. 'Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men, in whom there is no salvation' (Ps. 145, 3). Although I first managed to express this in April 1974 in 'Premonition' in *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, the contents of this revelation have been confirmed again and again throughout the last forty years, and against all odds.

The existence of this Church is a miracle and those who have donated to this Church have participated in this miracle. It is the miracle of a Church which has come into existence against all

probability, against all the persecutions amid the desert that we have wandered in over forty years, against all the spoilers and thwarters, the fakes and deniers, and there have been plenty of them all, who gave us not a chance and stood by mocking us, like those who mocked while Noah built the Ark. It is not possible for any genuine Orthodox not to rejoice with us at this spiritual victory.

Our task now is to gather the scattered together. And this saying we have from a saint of the last century. A little before his arrest and martyrdom in 1918, a priest asked Archbishop Andronicus of Perm how to save his flock in Soviet conditions. The future hieromartyr replied: '*Encourage everyone and reconcile those who have been embittered by life, pour into them the principles of the life that is made radiant by the Gospel of Christ. Our task is to gather together Christ's flock, to organise the living forces of Church people in their parishes, so that people who have been disillusioned by all manner of isms, might here, in the Church, among the faithful, find a living haven of tranquillity and the goodness of peace.*'

This Church represents the triumph of the purity of Holy Orthodoxy. For it is a Church built for soldiers to go and fight against Holy Orthodoxy, but instead has become a shrine for us soldiers of Christ to go and defend Holy Orthodoxy. As St Herman of Alaska said: '*A true Christian is a soldier who fights his way through the legions of the unseen enemy to his heavenly homeland.*'

Moreover, the decision that the Church would be granted to the Russian Orthodox Church came on the eve of St George's Day, 23 April / 6 May 2008, which was also the commemoration of the departed (Radonitsa) and the commemoration of the fortieth day of the repose of the ever-memorable Metropolitan Laurus. May we be kept humble, so that we may be worthy of the stewardship of this gift of God. Truly, our God is a God Who works miracles. Glory to Thee O God, Glory to Thee!

1. See <http://www.russian-victories.ru/crimea.htm>: 'The prime cause of the Crimean War was the problem of the Holy Places in Palestine. Soviet scholarship omitted this factor for ideological reasons. Soviet Academician Yevgeny Tarle maintained that the problem of the holy places was secondary and irrelevant in the entire tangle of international issues that led to the outbreak of the Crimean (Eastern) War. It is difficult to agree with that. It was not accidental indeed that the Orthodox Arab East called this three-year-long military campaign 'a war for the Palestinian Holy Places'.

After all, in the 'Greek-Latin dispute' for the Holy Places, St Petersburg stood for maintaining the *status quo* in Christian places of veneration, where it was Jerusalem Orthodox clergy who had the privilege to own and preserve them. Russia, just as France, traditionally patronised Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire. When the Ottoman sultan, in his letter to the Russian Emperor, pledged to protect the rights and privileges of his Orthodox subjects in their dispute with the Catholics and then failed to keep his word, St Petersburg implemented all diplomatic and military means to make the Porte keep its promise. In that war, however, Russia did not seek any territorial gains. Her role was to protect the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the 'Mother of all Churches'. Western diplomacy did all it could to present Russia as the initiator of the war and the Sultan as a 'victim' of aggressive Tsarist policy, while appearing before the world public opinion as the saviour of 'the Sick Man', that is the Ottoman Empire, from its northern neighbour, that is Russia. Unfortunately, in Western historiography, just as in Soviet scholarship, the problem of the Holy Places did not become the subject of objective and honest study. Actually, nobody studied it in any serious way. Nevertheless, if this knot of contradictions and problems regarding the Holy Places is patiently untangled, it will be clear who the real initiator of the conflict in Jerusalem, Constantinople and

Europe was. Our task is to clear the history of the Crimean War of myths and stereotypes created for political and ideological reasons. Western historiography does not like to explain on the fact that it was England, France and Sardinia who were the first to declare war on Russia. The interventionists' aim was to involve the Tsar in the war, aware that he would not refuse Orthodox Christians protection, and then to accuse him of aggression against the Sultan and to 'come to the padishah's aid'. It was their warships that shelled the Russian villages of Chapoma and Umba, the Russian cities of Odessa, Sevastopol, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky and Orthodox holy places such as the Solovki Monastery. They looted abandoned churches only to return the loot in modern times in an attempt to whitewash their militant ancestors. Let us remember that only recently Pope John Paul II apologized to the Orthodox Greeks and Arabs for the Crusades his predecessors carried out in the Holy Land. We should not forget that Old Russia also suffered from them in the 13th century and that, thanks to the courage and wisdom of the Orthodox Prince Alexander Nevsky and the heroism of the home guard he summoned, the Teutonic Knights were driven away from our land, just as the Saracens had driven them away from the Palestine not long before that.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Is it true that you are not Orthodox, if you are not in communion with the Patriarch of Constantinople?

*S. W., London*

This is complete nonsense, simply Roman Catholicism with a change of Pope. Various Patriarchs of Constantinople have in history been heretics. Nobody would want to be in communion with them and the saints were not. Therefore this false definition of Orthodoxy would exclude several saints from the Church calendar. And one who rejects the Church calendar of his Local Church is not Orthodox.



I know it sounds strange, but I have heard that the Jesus Prayer can be dangerous and that you can even go mad from using it. Apparently this happened on

Mt Athos in about 1900. Is there any truth in any of this?

*P. A., Oxford*

There is no truth in this, but there is truth in something that is much more subtle. This is that if we decide to use any prayer, including the Jesus Prayer, in a proud way, in order to delude ourselves into thinking that we have become 'saints', that we are 'always right' and 'superior to everyone else', then prayer is indeed dangerous and can drive us mad – just as any form of pride can drive us mad. Thus, it is not prayer that can drive us mad, but a wrong or proud motivation for prayer. Through pride of mind our prayer can become a blasphemy.

For example, the novice with impure, unchannelled and emotional zeal, or the

intellectual, one who lives in the imaginations and opinions of his mind, who wants to achieve 'enlightenment', attaining 'the inner kingdom' as soon as possible, is in danger. If he proceeds without guidance to repeat the Jesus Prayer perhaps several thousand times per day for a length of time, he is very prone to self-delusion. In this 'prelest' or illusion of mental fantasy, the devil may appear to him in the form of an 'angel of light', as the Apostle warns us, and deceive him.

Historically, this mass self-delusion actually occurred among the 'name-worshippers' in the Russian monasteries on Mt Athos 100 years ago. Some monks there believed in a 'new dogma' that had appeared in 1907, that the Name of Jesus is itself Jesus. This was a form of Platonist pantheism, believed in and spread by very ignorant monks, some of them 'penitent' former criminals. The ringleaders in fact used this piece of obscurantist ritualism as an excuse to try and seize power and obtain money.

Ironically, this idolatrous superstition of the uneducated was supported in Moscow by left-wing intellectuals and gnostics like Fr Paul Florensky and S. N. Bulgakov and later by the left-wing press (the extremes always meet). (Indeed, it was still being supported by intellectuals of the Paris Jurisdiction in the 1970s and 1980s). Crisis point was reached in 1912-1913, resulting in some 120 monks being removed by the Russian government and put on a Russian ship back to Russia. This left the remaining 4,500 Russian monks then on Athos in peace and without fear of being beaten up by fanatical and revolutionary elements who had infiltrated the monastic body.

How can we guard against this in ourselves and how can we know that others are genuine in their prayer and have not fallen into self-delusion? Always by their humility. If people have humility, the spirit of meekness and obedience, and lack all signs of vanity, jealousy, impurity, pride, arrogance, fanaticism and violence, then we know that they are Orthodox Christians. 'By their fruits ye shall know them'.



What is the difference between human-beings and animals? I know that people have immortal souls and animals do not, but what does this mean exactly?

*S. P., Felixstowe*

1) Physically, it means that we have speech, which is the sign of the presence of the Word of God inside us. At best some animals (parrots) can

imitate human speech, but this not a sign of intelligence, only of imitation.

2) Intellectually, it means that that we have a civilisation, we create literature, music, art, sculpture. Animals do not create this, because they are of limited mental and emotional ability.

3) Spiritually, it means that we pray, that we build cathedrals, churches, monasteries, we paint icons, sew vestments, hold religious services, perform the mysteries of the sacraments. Animals cannot do this, because they are unable to worship and pray to God, all they can do, at best, is fear the presence of the spiritual.

Animals, eat, drink, reproduce and sleep. And, of course, this is what human-beings are reduced to when they lose the sense of the spiritual, that which above all defines our difference with the animal world. For example, a viewing of contemporary soap-operas could give the impression that human-beings are animals, simply slightly more intelligent (and more violent).



How do we know that we are doing God's will?

*S. P., Felixstowe*

There is a sort of false piety which says that 'But I am only doing God's will'. This is phariseism, and this phrase comes from the lips of people who are gripped by such a spiritual disease of illusion ('prelest'). This is in fact merely self-justification, one of the worst forms of self-delusion. Such people will even justify themselves with dreams, sent by the demons.

The answer to your question about God's Will is in the words of Christ in the Gospel: 'By their fruits ye shall know them' (Matt 7, 20). In other words, those who are really doing God's Will do good works, those who are not, come to a sticky end – sooner or later. That sticky end is always marked by a lack of love. The signs of not doing God's Will are hatred and a lack of forgiveness, because those are the fruits of the tree of the demons. This is typical of the sectarian mentality.



What is the Christian attitude to yoga and meditation?

*S. P., Felixstowe*

Yoga is a physical exercise that relaxes the body. In itself, it is therefore just a form of sport. However, yoga can be associated with forms of meditation, which are Non-Christian, and can

easily become spiritually harmful. That sort of yoga is not to be done by Christians.

In the same way, other forms of meditation can easily become spiritually harmful, because they encourage the fantasy, that is, the imagination, which creates prideful images. Many Roman Catholics have fallen in this way and even lost faith, coming to believe in themselves and their own psychic powers, rather than in God. One well-known Orthodox bishop, who had not been brought up in the Church, imitating such techniques he had found in Buddhism and Hinduism, also fell in this way. That was, and is, a slippery slope.

Orthodox Christians do not practise meditation, they pray. Only in this way can we face the difficulties of everyday life and only in this way can the martyrs face torture and death.



How do we know that the soul exists? There are no photographs.

*S. P., Felixstowe*

If there were 'photographs' of the soul, this would be proof that the photographs were fakes. It is impossible to make material images of something immaterial. We 'know' that the soul exists, because we can feel it inside ourselves (if our souls are spiritually awake), because when we are with someone who has just died, we know that something has left them, because when a mother gives birth, it is impossible even to consider that she has given birth to a lump of meat. (This is why it is almost impossible for a mother not to believe in the soul).

As for 'proof', there is no 'proof', because proof is always 'rational', in other words limited to the size of our tiny minds. All of this is 'super-rational': that is beyond the reason, because what is uncreated (the soul) cannot be understood by the created (the mind).



Atheists say that people believe because people need God, because they need to believe. How can we answer them?

*S. P., Felixstowe*

I am reminded of the philosopher Voltaire, who said that 'if God did not exist, people would invent him'. Of course, there are people who 'use' God (that is, they use the idea of God) as a kind of mental crutch, an excuse or justification for all sorts of personal weaknesses. But this has nothing to do with the existence of God, rather it proves the

existence of human weakness and sin (if you were ever in doubt of that). Surely, if people need to believe, this suggests that belief is natural to the human-being. Atheists for example have their 'gods' – the human reason, some famous atheist etc. All human beings respect or revere other people or other qualities. In other words, it is an objective fact that we need to look up to something or someone. Why not look up to something or someone great, admirable, for example, someone who has conquered evil and death?



Given the shortage of bishops, is it not time to think of restoring a married episcopate?

*J. T., London*

The shortage of bishops, or rather perhaps candidates for the episcopate, is by no means universal, but mainly in the diaspora. There are some arguments against the proposition of a married episcopate, the restoration of which in any case would require an Œcumenical Council, since no single Local Church is able to make such a ruling.

Firstly, if a married episcopate were abandoned, why restore it? There must have been very good reasons for its abandonment.

Secondly, a married episcopate would cause a lot of unhealthy competition and rivalry among married priests.

Thirdly, and above all, I cannot imagine any woman in her right mind wanting to be married to a bishop. It is already very difficult being married to a priest. But if you were married to a bishop, it would virtually mean being a widow with children, because your husband would always be away and never available. That is hardly a life for any woman. I think the people who talk glibly about married bishops have no concept of what it is to be a woman and one married to a priest.



Why do those of a modernist frame of mind put such emphasis on the eucharist?

*T. A., Florida*

This is because they deny the importance of ascetic practices, prayer and fasting, which they deride as 'liturgical piety' (*sic*). As a result they often treat the eucharist almost as a sort of magic. 'Take communion and you will be better'. In reality, the preparation for communion is just as important as communion. Preparation for communion includes attending, when possible, the



Vigil Service, which contains all the theology and teachings of the Church. The same can be said of other services, akathists, services of supplication, memorial services, compline etc



Some time ago you said that you favoured the Thou form in services, but not the third person '-eth' ending as opposed to '-s' (for example, maketh rather than makes). Why?

*R. J., Staffordshire*

To use 'you' rather than 'thou' is simply unthinkable. It is also ignorant. Thou is the form used in Greek, Slavonic etc. Either we use a translation or else we do not. 'Thou' is a translation, the form used for God Who dwells in us, for the saints, to whom we feel so close. 'You' is the cold, Protestant form, used by those who deny the saints and make God into a distant being. We are called to create heaven on earth, not earth on earth, bringing us to God and God to us. God is 'familiar' to us, part of our Orthodox family. As in other countries they use 'thou' with their families (in this country the traditional Quakers still do it), so we use thou to God, the Mother of God, the saints and angels, because we are part of the Orthodox Christian family, not divorced from it in sectarianism.

As for the 'eth' ending, even in the sixteenth century, it was antiquated and not pronounced. Liturgical language is traditional, but it should not be obsolete or deliberately obscure. Notably, the finest liturgical translator, Metr Kallistos Ware, does not use it



When can weddings take place? Can a wedding take place on a Saturday?

*N. S., Brussels*

Outside the fasts, weddings can take place on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. They cannot take place on the eves of the fast-days, Tuesdays and Thursdays, (unless they fall in fast-free weeks), nor can they take place on Saturdays (the eve of the day of the Resurrection, when we should be preparing for communion).

The problem with weddings on Wednesdays and Fridays is that then a wedding reception would have to have fasting food. So, in the end, we find ourselves with only Sundays and Mondays as possibilities and Mondays are usually working days

Of course, the diocesan bishop may make exceptions. For example, if couples who have

been co-habiting wish to marry, then he may well say that they may marry any day. In the Czech Republic, it is virtually impossible to marry on a Sunday (this is a new law there). As a result, weddings there often take place on Saturday mornings, before midday, again by episcopal blessing.



Is there any proof that God exists?

*S. P., Felixstowe*

There is no 'intellectual' proof that God exists. This is because our intellect (our brain or reasoning powers) is not a tool which is made for discovering or understanding God. To use our brain to try and discover God is like trying to use a lawn-mower as a hammer to nail wood together or else to use a hammer to cut the grass. In other words, each tool has a different function, so also each human faculty also has a different function.

The proof that God exists is in our instinctive sense, cultivated in our hearts. The cleaner our hearts, the higher that sense and the more that is revealed about God to us. Thus, even primitive people 'know' that a God or Creator of some sort exists. However, the saints know a great more about God because they have cultivated and refined their spiritual sense, that is, their hearts.

This is why the aim of our life is the cleansing or refining of our hearts (repentance), what is called 'the acquisition of the Holy Spirit'. That is the meaning of the word 'salvation'. Only once we have done this, does our intellect (brain or reasoning powers) become more lucid and new layers of the ability to understand revealed. On this also, our bodies are also refined and feel lighter or transparent. Thus, our will, our thoughts and our way of life change for the better and our steps are redirected.



What are the fifty books of the Orthodox Old Testament?

*P. B. London*

- 1-5) The Pentateuch
- 6) Joshua
- 7) Judges
- 8) Ruth
- 9-10) 1 and 2 Kingdoms (1 and 2 Samuel in the Hebrew)
- 11-12) 3 and 4 Kingdoms (1 and 2 Kings in the Hebrew)

- 13-14) 1 and 2 Chronicles are and 2 Paralipomenon (1 and 2 Chronicles in the Hebrew)
- 15-24) Then come 1 Esdras, Nehemiah, 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Esther, Job, Psalter, Proverbs of Solomon, Ecclesiastes
- 25-29) Song of Songs, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach, Isaiah, Jeremiah
- 30-45) Lamentations, Letter of Jeremiah, Baruch, Ezekiel and the other Prophets to Zechariah
- 46-50) Malachi, 1, 2, 3 Maccabees and the last book of the Orthodox OT is 3 Esdras

Note that

Orth Esdras 1 = Vulgate Esdras 1 (Ezra in Hebrew)

Orth Nehemiah = Vulgate Esdras 2

Orth Esdras 2 = Vulgate Esdras 3 in Appendix

Orth Esdras 3 = Vulgate Esdras 4 in Appendix.

I should also add that the text of the Slavonic Esdras 1 is the text of Esdras 2 in the Greek and the text of the Slavonic Esdras 2 is the text of Esdras 1 in the Greek. These texts are exactly the same, Slavonic, Greek and Latin. It is simply the order and the naming that are different



Why are the iconostasis doors closed before the Vigil on the Saturday after Easter and not left open until the Ascension, that is for the full forty days after the Feast?

*A. P., Felixstowe*

This relates to the events of Thomas Sunday, as commemorated in the Vigil on the Saturday evening. Specifically it refers to Christ's appearance to the disciples - 'the doors being closed for fear of the Jews'. So we close the doors, that Christ might appear to us through them.



Why is Bright Week so called?

*A. P., Felixstowe*

This is because the Resurrection of Christ is radiant, light-giving, so that after Easter we have

light in our hearts and feel light. It is an ancient name, since in olden times it was known in Western countries as '*hebdomada alba*', 'White Week', which expresses the same idea of light



Now that Communism has gone, should we attempt to restore pre-Revolutionary Russia?

*E. L., Moscow*

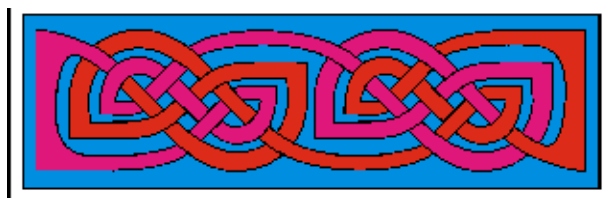
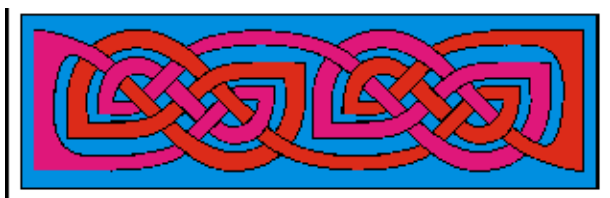
Definitely not – if pre-Revolutionary Russia is restored, then there will simply be another Revolution. The rot that brought about the Revolution began not in 1917, but 250 years before in the late seventeenth century, when the State, heavily influenced by Polonised and Italianised nobles (boyars) and grasping or Uniat Greek bishops, engineered the deposition of Patriarch Nikon and the Old Believer schism so that they could destroy the power of the Church. This was the beginning of the end of the 'symphony' between Church and State. Vicious persecution followed with thousands of Orthodox being massacred and the gradual attempts by a secularised State, especially under Peter I and later the German Catherine, to turn the Church into a mere department of State.



How do those who wish to form a new parish decide to whom to dedicate their parish?

*N. S., Portugal*

Sometimes the people who are interested in forming a new parish will have personal preferences. They should pray and decide as quickly as possible. Perhaps they will be influenced by local traditions or history. They should also think practically. Is this a feast, like the Resurrection or the Holy Trinity or All Saints, that falls on a Sunday and therefore can be celebrated by all? Or would the diocesan bishop agree to transferring the feast to the nearest Saturday – as ROCOR bishops have always done and as is always done in the case of the feast of St John of Shanghai.





## BUT FOR BEAUTY



**But for beauty, it would be a woeful world.**

*Old English poem, c. 750*





