

ORTHODOX ENGLAND

In this issue:

*St Alfred the Eternal
King of the English*

*A Noble Stone in the
Foundations of English Royalty*

*Paradise Just Beyond:
fragments of a life*

The Enclosures

Alfred and Edmund

and much more . . .

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Editorial: ST ALFRED THE ETERNAL – KING OF THE ENGLISH

Your lord sits high in the saddle,
A broken-hearted king,
But our king Alfred, lost from fame,
Fallen among foes or bonds of shame,
In I know not what mean trade or name,
Has still some song to sing;

*'The Harp of Alfred',
The Ballad of the White Horse,
G. K. Chesterton, 1911*

EVERY age has found a different reflection of and a different need for St Alfred; it is as though his significance were eternal and that significance has progressively been revealed to us as time has gone by and as our need for an example has developed.

Thus, the English of St Alfred's Kingdom found in him our first national King, a warrior champion and defender of the realm, who overcame division and united his realm, one who came from the provinces but became national, a monastic founder and a patient almsgiver – England's Darling and England's Shepherd. Soon they found in him also the Truth-teller, a model of proverbial wisdom in kingship and shrewd lawgiver. Then they found in him a saintly miracle-worker as well as a national hero.

Later, once they had others to compare him with, they found in him the only King who was worthy to be called Great, bold in arms but also learned in the Divine. More recently, they found in him a model of imperial rule, dispensing wisdom and justice to his various peoples. And what of us, what do we find in this saint among kings, 'what song has he still to sing' to our own age? In our darkening times, we recall perhaps the words of 'The Vision of the King' in the poet's above recalled epic:

I tell you naught for your comfort,
Yea, naught for your desire,
Save that the sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher.

Night shall be thrice night over you,
And heaven an iron cope.
Do you have joy without a cause,
Yea, faith without a hope?

And now we can answer that we do have joy with a cause and faith with hope. For, inevitably,

we also recall the prophetic words of the Great King applied to our own time in the poet's 'The Scouring of the Horse' in the same epic:

And though they scatter now and go,
In some far century sad and slow,
I have a vision, and I know
The heathen shall return.

Despite the truth of this foretelling, we do not fear. There is no need for our thoughts to grow overly dark. Let us recall the King's words in his addition to the translation of 'Boethius': 'I say, as do all Christian men, that it is a Godly purpose that rules, and not fate'. This means that we should not fear or be daunted by the present rising tide of faithlessness and so evil in our land – there is a Divine purpose even in the darkest of times.

As the poet also wrote in 'Ethandune' from the same *Ballad of the White Horse*:

And Alfred born in Wantage
Rules England till the doom.

What do we today find in the great and holy King? We find in him a reflection of the Eternal truth of the Eternal One, the everlasting words of the Word, for that which is true will remain unto the ages and ages; Alfred can never be taken away from us because, like all saints, he is a reflection of the Eternal One Himself. And it is for this reason that in him is the birth of the English nation, but also our rebirth, and therefore our hope.

Troparion of the saint in Tone IV

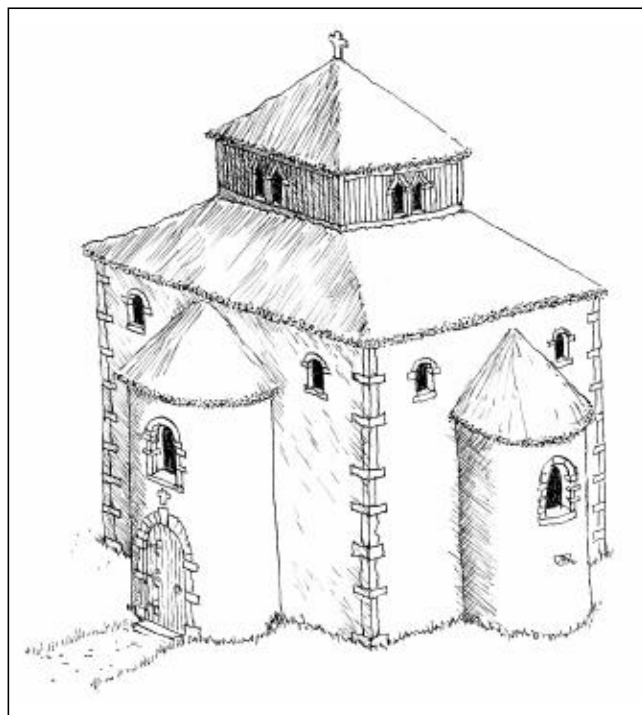
Hearkening to the White Christ, thou camest forth from thy flood-girt fastness to overcome the heathen and lead them forth to holy baptism. Thou didst build churches, strongholds, shires and swift ships, restoring the law of God and making thyself beloved of all. O wise King and glory of free England, who reignest in the Winchester of the heavenly England, thou who didst vanquish heathendom by Christendom, establish anew the Orthodox Faith in thy land that we may glorify God, Who alone made thee great

Kontakion of the saint, Tone II

Today the wise Alfred glorifies the White Christ among his faithful people and so builds a House of Wisdom. Therein he puts to shame all the heathen, showing the Cross to be the greatest weapon of kings against all enemies. Pray for us, O righteous one, and build a House of Wisdom among us today that there we may glorify the White Christ anew. For this great battle standard has appeared for our sakes and for our salvation.

(For many years now the once local veneration of St Alfred has been blessed and encouraged by His Grace Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) in the general calendar of the Greek Orthodox St John the Baptist Fellowship. As he has written: 'In general, in the case of saints from the first millennium, when there was full sacramental unity between East and West, we Orthodox do not consider it necessary to proceed to a formal act of recognition. It is sufficient for us to establish that there already exists a cult in his honour, and this is certainly the case in regard to Blessed King Alfred'.

This veneration is now also being blessed and encouraged by Bishop Jerome (Shaw) of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. As he has written: 'Full communion existed between the Western Church and the rest of the Orthodox Church in the first millennium: therefore, we do not need a special act of canonization for the Western Saints of that period. But I believe we can also say that full communion still does exist



An artist's reconstruction of the church St Alfred founded at Athelney

between the Latin Church of the first millennium, and the rest of the Orthodox Church, today. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, and 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow': and there is no time in Heaven'.

(The above troparion and kontakion are part of the full service to St Alfred, which is celebrated on a suitable day after 26 October / 8 November, in order to avoid coinciding with the feast of the Great Martyr Demetrius).

From the Holy Fathers: ST GREGORY THE GREAT, APOSTLE OF THE ENGLISH

Christ is the Morning Star

Let us carefully consider the words of the Gospel, when it says, 'The star came to rest directly over where the young child lay'. This star was drawn towards the child, not the child to the star. Note that this star in no way influenced the fate of the Babe Who was born, but that this Infant affected the course of the star by His appearing. So let no soothsayer or astrologer approach a Christian believer. Only God the Creator can influence the lives of those whom He created in love in the beginning. Human beings were not

made to be subject to the stars, but stars exist for the benefit and ordering of human life.

The Wise Men brought their gifts in recognition of him – gold, incense and myrrh. Gold is appropriate for a king; incense expresses sacrifice to God; while the bodies of departed human beings are anointed with myrrh. Therefore these Magi, by their gifts, each with its own mystical meaning, proclaim Him Whom they worshipped: a king with the gold, God with incense, and a human-being with myrrh.

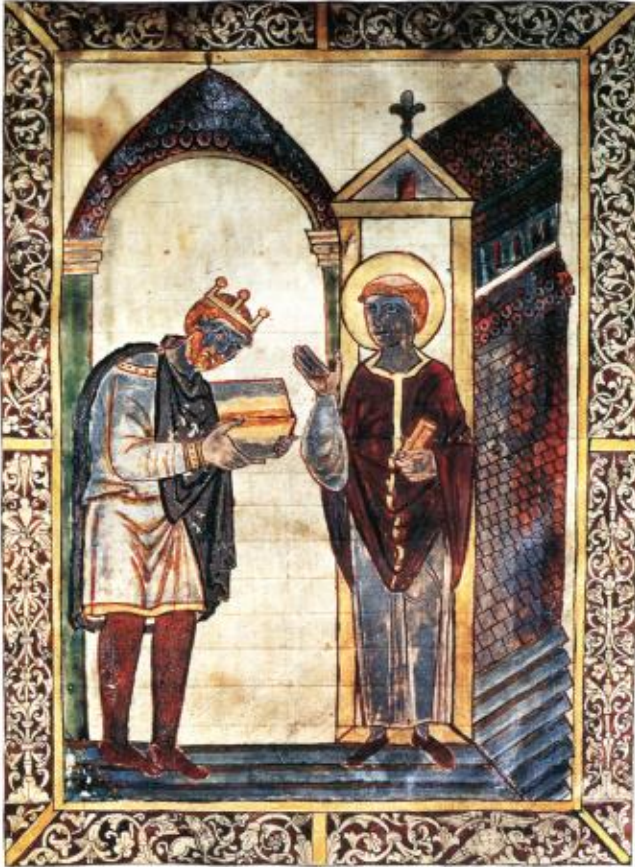
St Gregory the Great – Homilies.



The Decline of England:

1. A NOBLE STONE IN THE FOUNDATIONS OF ENGLISC ROYALTY

By Eadmund



King Æthelstan holding a copy of Bede's Lives of St Cuthbert, which he is presenting to St Cuthbert.

IN Englisc¹, 'Æpel' means noble, and 'stan' means stone or rock (as does Petros in Greek) so the Englisc name Æpelstan, literally translated, means 'Noble-stone'. Æpelstan, or to put his name into a form more common to the modern eye, Æthelstan², was the grandson of king Ælfræd³ (Ælfred) of Wessex. Even in his early years his grandfather noticed him with favour, and ceremonially presented him with a sword and a red, royal cloak, thus marking him as a future heir to his kingdom.

In the reigns of Ælfred's father and brothers the original heptarchy⁴, set up by the Englisc soon after their arrival, had been destroyed by the Viking raids, a process that continued until Ælfred was left with nothing but a few guerrilla fighters in an isolated village in the marshes of Somerset. From this poor state he fought back until he had restored

his kingdom of Wessex to its original bounds and also liberated Kent, London, and a part of Mercia: the other Englisc ruling houses had been wiped out. After that, he undertook a programme of education in order to attempt the reversal of the damage that had been done by the Vikings, who tended to pick on the monasteries, the centres of learning, as they were also sources of undefended worldly treasure. For these achievements he was awarded posthumously the title 'the Great'.

To us, who know England as a long-unified kingdom, it might be thought obvious that an Englisc king would take over the rule of all of it, but it was not at all obvious at the time. The Vikings were still a great threat to peace and stability, and the peoples of Mercia and Northumbria had little history of unity with each other, or with Wessex. True there had once been Bretwaldas, or theoretical 'rulers of Britain', but it was many years since an individual king had been powerful enough to overawe his fellow monarchs. The Mercians had a long and glorious independent history, but since their conquest by the Vikings and their subsequent liberation by Ælfred they were governed by their Ealdorman⁵, Æthelræd, who had married Ælfred's daughter, Æthelflæd. In the reign of Eadward, Ælfred's son, his sister Æthelflæd, the lady of Mercia, was far more than a traditional mediæval lady, and with her husband led armies and carried on a very successful campaign against the Vikings, to restore Mercian borders to their former extent. Eadward was first married to Ecgywynn, who bore him Æthelstan, and a daughter Eadgyth, who was to marry Sihtric, the Danish king of York. He then married Ælfflæd, the daughter of Ealdorman Æthelhelm, who bore him two sons, Ælfweard and Edwin and six daughters. Finally he married Eadgifu, daughter of Ealdorman Sigehelm, and she bore him two more sons and two daughters. This female predominance at Eadward's court could have been part of the reason why the young Æthelstan spent so much time with his uncle and aunt. While he was with them he had the benefit of a princely education and excellent training in the necessities of war.

However Eadward seems to have superseded his father's plans with a new scheme that included Ælfweard, his son by Ælfflæd, in the kingship. He died on 17 July 924 at Farndon, in northern Mercia, where he fell ill after just having subdued a rebellion of the men of Chester, who had allied themselves with the Welsh. Æthelstan was probably with his father on this campaign, and given the strategic nature of the northwestern frontier, he took advantage of the presence of the army and of the leading men of the realm to secure his succession on the spot. It would have taken several days for the news of the king's death to reach the rest of the court of Wessex in Winchester, where Ælfweard remained in nominal charge, and he also may have reacted opportunistically after his father's death far from home, capitalizing on the equally pressing need for the nobility of Wessex to fill the power vacuum. The thing might have ended with Æthelstan succeeding to the revived throne of Mercia, whilst his stepbrother took the throne of Wessex, but Ælfweard was to die in mid-August after a rule of only four weeks. This premature death left Æthelstan as the sole heir of the united realm, albeit without a particularly strong personal power base in Wessex.

This situation was further complicated, but unfortunately the sources are varied and differ considerably as to the details of what happened. There is one account of a failed rebellion in Winchester involving Æthelstan's other stepbrother, Eadwin. Another account has Eadwin accused of treason, and Æthelstan refusing to accept his denial on oath and exiling him in a boat rotten with age and without oars or oarsmen. In the subsequent storm Eadwin was drowned, although his squire managed to haul his body back on board and brought it back to Kent, where King Æthelstan, stricken with remorse, undertook a seven-year penance. Neither of these accounts is acceptable, for various reasons, and we only know that some unfortunate event occurred early in the reign, resulting in Eadwin's death at sea in 933, and a frostiness in relations with Winchester. However no other contenders for the throne having emerged, Æthelstan was crowned king on 4th September 925.

Crowned at Kingston

The coronation did not take place at Winchester, but at Kingston-upon-Thames, not only because the new king was not particularly welcome at Winchester, but also because Kingston

lay symbolically on the border between Mercia and Wessex, at the point where the Thames became tidal: an important church synod had met there in 838. Later kings were also to follow Æthelstan's lead, and elect to be crowned there. For this unique inauguration to the joint kingship of Wessex and Mercia, Æthelstan, with the support of his archbishop of Canterbury, Æthelhelm, had a new liturgical ceremony drawn up. This provided the means of making important statements about the king's understanding of his power and responsibilities, and for showing his uneasily united flock a novel conception of a single realm made up of two peoples. This *ordo* was also new in that instead of investing the king with a helmet, he was crowned and given a ring to mark his acceptance of his responsibility to support the true faith; a sword, to 'help widows and orphans and restore things left desolated'; a sceptre to defend the holy Church and Christian people committed to him; and a rod so that he might soothe the righteous and terrify the reprobate, teach the right way to those who stray, and stretch forth a hand to those who have fallen. The crown was of a style closely associated with Roman and Carolingian models, and hinted at Imperial rather than simply royal claims⁶.

First King of all mainland Britain

Æthelstan lost no time in cementing an alliance with the Danes by marrying his sister, Eadgyth to Sihtric Cáech, the king of the Viking kingdom of York in January 926. This proved to be a far-sighted move, for Sihtric died the following year, and Æthelstan immediately used the presence of a widowed sister in now hostile territory to march into York, where he claimed the whole kingdom of Northumbria. At a stroke this made the King of Wessex suddenly the direct neighbour of Scotland, Strathclyde and Bamburgh and thus caused some disturbance. Æthelstan's presence in York with an army was probably sufficient of itself to overawe the other kings, or there may have been some skirmishing, but eventually Hywel, king of the West Welsh; Constantin, king of the Scots; Owain, king of the people of Gwent; and Ealdred, son of Eadwulf from Bamburgh all came to a conference with him at a place called Eamont in Cumbria, south of Penrith, where they renounced idolatry and established peace with pledges and oaths. He had thus, at a stroke, brought into effect what no other king had ever even contemplated before: he had established his domination over the whole of mainland Britain.⁷

However this peace did not prove to be permanent. In 934 the king had to assemble his army again, together with a naval force, in response to hostile moves by Constantin, and lead the combined force north. He then ravaged Scotland, although exactly how far he penetrated into the kingdom is in some doubt, one source saying that he only got as far as Edinburgh, and another maintaining that he reached as far as Caithness, which hints at a beginning of the alliance between the Scots and the Norseman that was to solidify three years later. It was quite amazing to be able to mount a co-ordinated land and sea campaign in the 10th century, without any ship-to-shore communication or even a regular code of signal-flags. Other kings tried it with little success. One can only imagine how Æthelstan overcame the enormous navigational and communications difficulties. It is a possibility, however, that some of the Englisc shipmasters may have been converted Vikings: he is known to have used such as mercenaries.

Victor at Brunanburh

After this charter evidence shows that he had Constantin firmly in tow as a hostage at his court, along with hostages from the various Welsh kingdoms, but even this was not enough to prevent the Scots from turning to the York-Dublin Scandinavian dynasty with which they had previously been in conflict. A combined force of Dublin Norse, led by Olaf Guthfrithsson (who had become king in Dublin on his father's death in 934), Scots under Constantin, and Owain's Strathclyde Welsh confronted the English in 937 in a great battle at a place called Brunanburh. It is amazing that the site of so great and decisive a battle should now be unknown, but that is unhappily the case: the most likely place for it is Bromborough in Cheshire⁸. It is celebrated in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle by a seventy-three-line verse account, in which it describes the total defeat of Constantin, who lost his son on the field, and of Olaf who fled ignominiously back to Dublin, the bulk of their armies carrion for the black raven, white-tailed eagle, hungry hawk and grey wolf. Stressing the magnitude of the triumph, the poet sets the battle in the longest possible temporal context, describing it as a greater victory than that won by any Englisc force since the first Germanic migration to these shores: a victory not just for Wessex but for all the Anglo-Saxon peoples. Had Æthelstan's opponents won, the West Saxon hegemony over the whole mainland of Britain

would have disintegrated – the Norse kingdom of York would have been recreated; the security of Northern Mercia would have been imperilled and the future of the recently liberated eastern Danelaw might even have been put in doubt.

European Politics

So far we have been concentrating on Æthelstan's military prowess, but there was far more to his character than simply that. As I have said, he had an excellent education, as one would expect for a grandson of Ælfred, and was probably taught the Latin language in addition to being able to read and write in his own tongue. Later on he certainly showed an interest in Latin books.

His supreme position in England gave him an unprecedented influence in European politics that only Offa of Mercia had approached up to that time, and he used it to marry his many sisters advantageously in foreign courts. Eadgifu married Charles the Simple, King of the West Franks. Eadgyth married Otto of Saxony, Eadhild married Hugh, Duke of the Franks, and Ælfgifu⁹ married Louis, brother of Rudolf of Burgundy.

His court was cosmopolitan; partly owing to the collection of British princes whom he kept there under his eye. There were young princes whom he fostered, or to whom he gave protection until they were able to return to their own countries, among whom were his nephew Louis the Simple; Alain, heir to the Breton throne and Hákon, son of Harald of Norway. Franks, Germans, Scandinavians, Irish and above all Bretons had a tangible influence on the intellectual development of English clerics in the king's circle. The dissemination of a wider range of texts, especially in Greek, and the sharing of new ideas about the practice of the communal religious life fed ultimately into the institutional reforms of the second half of the 10th century¹⁰.

Improved Literacy Means Better Government

The broader compass of his rule also created the necessity of improving the system of communication and government. The Englisc were the first people in northern Europe to use the written vernacular. Ælfæd had instituted a programme for the regeneration of his people after the Viking wars of the 870s, and he insisted that his ealdormen should be able to follow his written instructions if they were read aloud to them, even if they could not read themselves. Eadweard's legislation referred specifically to written injunctions made to

his reeves. Æthelstan, too, sought to convey his will in written form, and set out penalties if 'any of you is unwilling to attend to the duties of government, in accordance with what I have commanded and set down in writing.' He tried to rein in powerful kindred-groups, whose protection of family members accused of crime prevented their being brought to justice.

He had clear ideas about what he wanted to achieve and social problems, many of them resulting from years of warfare, that he wished to ameliorate. He asserted the importance of paying tithes of livestock and agricultural produce to the Church, directing his injunctions specifically to his reeves in the boroughs, urging them to ensure they rendered the tithes from his property and also instructed all bishops, ealdormen and reeves to do likewise with their own possessions. He also gave an ordinance laying the obligation to feed the poor on his reeves, and fined those who failed to comply, the money to be divided among the poor to compensate them. Theft was the greatest evil, and Æthelstan's codes repeatedly deal with this problem. Thieves found themselves facing the death penalty, whether or not they had been caught in the act, although juveniles under the age of fifteen were not to be executed 'because he thought it too cruel to kill so many young people and for such small crimes as he understood to be the case everywhere'. In London he instituted peace guilds to assist in the apprehension of malefactors. Although many kings, before and since, have legislated against theft, Æthelstan stands apart for his equation of breach of the peace, as symbolized by theft, as tantamount to oath breaking. Loyalty mattered to him and personal loyalty, the bond of a man's word to his lord, mattered very much indeed.

Piety and Generosity

Always known as a pious man, Æthelstan used his growing power and wealth to give generously to Abbeys and Minsters, to promote the *cultus* of native saints, and to collect relics from far and wide. This was not unique, but in Æthelstan's case interest was almost preternatural, and was so famed as to result in Frankish clerics and nobles making him gifts of the remains of Breton and other saints. Some of these he kept, and others he gave to Exeter, Abingdon, Winchester and other places considered worthy of his patronage. As far as native saints were concerned, he did not plunder their tombs, but instead co-opted important

regional saints into national saints to protect his newly expanded realm. He imagined himself to be related to Aldhelm of Malmesbury, and Malmesbury Abbey was the recipient of generous bequests. The cult of the saint-king Oswald, translated in 909 from what was then Danish territory to Gloucester also benefited from his lasting devotion. But the saint who stands apart as the one above all others with whose cult Æthelstan had the closest association is St Cuthbert, who had also assisted his grandfather. He took the opportunity of his march north with an army in 934 to make a diversion to Chester-le-Street, where the celebrated coffin was opened in his presence so that he could deposit a signed testament and some vestments in it, and make substantial gifts of books, liturgical and secular objects including money and land to the monks.

Conclusion

If one were to ask modern people to name English kings, they would probably say 'Alfred', with 'Edward the Confessor' and perhaps 'Ethelred the Unready' afterwards. The name Æthelstan would not immediately occur to them, and yet his status when he died on 27 October 939 after having ruled for fourteen years and ten weeks, could not have been higher. It even persisted after the Norman Conquest, when monastic writers looked back nostalgically to an English past before the evils they experienced in their time. Perhaps one reason for his memory's subsequent eclipse is the fact that, unusually, he did not take a wife or leave any heirs to perpetuate it. However he was the first King of the whole of mainland Britain, and his name was known and respected all over northern Europe. Now, when 21st century scholarship has resurrected him once again from the mists of time, we can see him as he was and not only commemorate him but also celebrate him as a great and noble king.

Further Reading

Sarah Foot, *Æthelstan, the First King of England*, Yale University Press, 2011. This is the first modern biography of Æthelstan, involving all kinds of meticulous and exceptional research to redevelop a portrait of a man from the mists of time. This paper is much indebted to it, and I cannot recommend it too highly to anyone interested in pursuing his studies further than the brief sketch contained here.

G. N. Garmonsway (trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Dent, 1954.

Sir Frank M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford, 1943; 3rd edn., 1971.

Dorothy Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society*, Penguin Books, 1954.

Hermann Pálsson & Paul Edwards, (trans.), *Egil's Saga*, Penguin Books, 1976.

- 1 Throughout this series of articles I have used the word Englisc to represent both the terms 'Old English' and 'Anglo-Saxon'. It is pronounced in much the same way as the modern word 'English'.
- 2 The 'þ' sign was a rune and represented the 'th' sound. The digraph 'Æ', also stood for a runic symbol, called 'ash' and represented a distinct sound. The Englisc pronounced Æ as in English 'hat', 'Æ' was pronounced as 'ai' in modern 'fair', and 'a' was pronounced as in the German word 'mann'; so it is not just pedantry to represent the digraph in modern script.
- 3 'Ælf' = 'Elf', and 'ræd' = 'counsel', so the name means 'Elf-counsel', or 'supernatural wisdom'.

- 4 The number of the kingdoms often varied, and their formation changed over time, but here I use the term 'heptarchy' because it is a common description of the kingdoms of the Englisc before the Viking age.
- 5 The modern successor of this Englisc title is 'Earl', which derives from the Viking 'Eorl'.
- 6 See the picture of King Æthelstan holding a copy of Bede's *Lives of St Cuthbert*, which he is presenting to St Cuthbert.
- 7 William of Malmesbury has it that Æthelstan then went immediately to Exeter, where he drove out the Cornish to beyond the Tamar. Although probably accurately reflecting C12th popular folklore, the truth is that Wessex extended its control over Cornwall about a century before Æthelstan's time, and other evidence shows that he considered it a secure part of his realm.
- 8 For a detailed discussion of the proposed sites, see *Æthelstan, the First King of England*, by Sarah Foot, Yale University Press, 2011, pp. 172-179.
- 9 There is some doubt as to this girl's name. For a full discussion see Sarah Foot, *op cit*, p. 50 *et seq*.
- 10 The sophistication of Æthelstan's court may be judged by the fact that the King and his friends played board games in the evenings. One of them, *Alea evangeli* (Gospel Dice), has survived.

PARADISE JUST BEYOND: Fragments of a Life

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down,
yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

Archpriest Andrew Phillips

Dedicated to S., without whose noble and constant self-sacrifice very little of this would have been possible.

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Foreword: Towards an Orthodox England

Seek after God, and your soul shall live.

AS the years roll by, I have been asked to set down what has helped me in the tasks that have filled my days. Now in the afternoon, or perhaps evening, of my life, it is time to record

the break of day and morning gone by. I will speak here only of the essentials which regard Church life. Here there will be few personal details, except at the beginning and that only by way of explanation. These fragments deal only with the motives of my life, not with such details. Those are part of my – and others' – private life and are of little interest. Here the reader will find only some of the portraits in the gallery of my mind, of which memory is the caretaker.

This is the story of over half a century of struggle, conscious and unconscious, towards restoring an Orthodox England that has been my destiny. We have always known that this Orthodox England will at best only ever be a pattern of scattered oases of the uncompromised Faith. However, these oases are only a few of the many centres of witness which swim against the tide the world over. We have struggled to put forward this England, denormanised, stripped of all the historical impurities, spiritual, intellectual, political, social and economic, of the Establishment, as it

developed after the Schism. My struggle has always been sincere. People may disagree, and are welcome to do so, with my interpretation of facts, but I speak of facts; lies are abhorrent to me and always have been. My struggle has always been for Truth. I was brought up 'to tell the truth and shame the devil'. Do not the Gospels say: 'The Truth will set you free'?

My struggle in this troubled world has therefore been for Beauty, for spiritual beauty, that is, the struggle to incarnate the spiritual beauty of which I have become aware in my life. Here spiritual beauty must also be understood as moral beauty, truth; otherwise the reader will risk imagining that I am speaking of mere æsthetic, physical and sensuous beauty, which is disincarnate. That is quite different from what I am speaking of. That is mere prettiness which is skin-deep; I speak of beauty which is soul-deep, the Beauty that outlives death. Much, much later this was explained to me by the profoundly Trinitarian words, 'Beauty endures where Wisdom has believed', that the Holy Spirit, the source of all Beauty, persists where Christ has been witnessed. Spiritual beauty is always at one and the same time moral beauty, because it is incarnate. In my life this has meant incarnate in England and in Europe. In other words, as the Psalmist says, I have sought after God, so that my soul should live.

The Greek word for 'struggle' is, aptly, 'agonia', and that is what for fifty years it has often seemed. Despite all this, Paradise just beyond has been the background to my life, its music, for wisdom comes from agony. I believe that each soul is like a radio receiver, trying to capture notes and voices of the heavenly music which is transmitted to us on earth and of which we are called to be the messengers. However, we are almost incapable of hearing this music and these voices because our spiritual ears are so deafened by the constant background noise of our own and others' sins. Each soul is also a radio transmitter, broadcasting to others on its own particular wavelength, which may also be that of others, according to the spirit of the age.

In our own times, with the coarsening of hearts after two World Wars and all the ensuing bread and circuses materialism and its manipulation of the masses, it seems as if people have become ever more unable to tune into this lovely, heavenly music and to the voices which uncover to us the law of our beings, which we are called to follow. They have become less and less receptive, less spiritually sensitive to the order, grace and beauty

of the universe, whose very existence they even deny and instead of which assert chaos.

This explains the decadence of modern art and life. Previously, artists captured notes of heavenly music; they apprehended the Divine in our God-given life, so creating Beauty in Art. In our times this is no longer, or at least only rarely, the case. Art has been debased, in the literal sense that it has lost its base, i.e. the inspiration of the spiritual, the sacred, the Divine. For true Art is any human creation that has been touched by the Divine. There is no Beauty in Art without a vision of God. This debasement is therefore a desecration, again in the literal sense, in that it has lost the sense of the sacred.

The music of my life is subtitled by the Creed, which I have in some very limited, human way lived through, coming to know in my weak and sinful way: God the Father, Christ, Who is God and man, Crucified and Risen, and then the Holy Spirit, sent by the Son from the Father, and the Church. They have, in some tiny way according to my tiny and unworthy human abilities, been revealed to me. Now I am coming from seedtime to harvest, ever nearer to my end, to the last things of the Creed, the mystery of the Resurrection and to the dread knowledge whether my own resurrection will be to salvation or not. Such are the hopes and fears of my years.

Someone once said to me, a long time ago now and in another place far from here, that life can be divided into periods, each lasting about seven years. Although this cannot quite always be true, these autobiographical fragments are divided into periods and the first period is indeed of seven years and taken together the eight periods do indeed total fifty-six years. Perhaps, therefore, there is some truth in his words. I will now embark on a brief description of these different periods.

1. Childhood: A Golden Age 1956–1963

*I will confess Thee, O Lord, with my
whole heart,*

I will tell of all Thy wonders

All my childhood I had the overwhelming and all-pervading sense of wonder of Paradise. Beauty was nearly here, tantalisingly close, just beyond the hill at the end of the lane where we lived or just behind the clouds in the sky above me. This was not Beauty in some superficial, sensuous or sensual way (which is dangerous and has led many astray), but Beauty as Freedom, as the presence of the

Spirit, Spiritual Beauty. The Beauty of Paradise was just beyond, a thin veil away, a veil separating this illusory life from real life, a veil beyond which the angels gleam and through which they some-times appear. The unearthly light of this undying vision of Beauty pervaded my inner being, unsealing my eyes. I did not know that this would be the way to 'unpathed waters, to undreamed shores' in my life, but so it has been. Thus, in childhood I touched raw, natural energy, the reality beyond all outward human appearances.

The beauty of the greenwashed countryside, God's Creation, lay all before me in childhood, like some slow rendering of Greensleeves. And I knew profoundly that this sense of real reality was God-given. So I grew up in a permanent nostalgia, a haunting yearning for Paradise, with the sense of the presence of Beauty, that is, of the Divine and the Sacred and the Holy, where I felt I had come from and where, despite myself, I was destined to go. I did not know then that this Revelation, in childhood continuous, was going to be part of a pattern and series of Revelations in my life.

The intervening years have found me in many strange and fascinating places, but the lovely countryside into which I was born has remained with me all down the years and its joys have not faded. The years have only brought greater powers of appreciation which have refreshed the memories of the past of fifty years ago now.

I was born into a small town, once, hundreds of years before, a prosperous wool town, like so many in eastern England, but then much smaller. At that time it still had much of its medieval atmosphere, the red-tiled and timbered homes of rich wool merchants, the feeling of centuries long past. Each town then had as its highest building a church, often a Domesday church. The population of this small town had by then gone down to 3,000. It belonged to the then little-known but very real Essex, six miles from the Suffolk border, where we knew little of towns like Southend, Brentwood or Basildon. For us, that was London, not Essex.

Where we lived, you could still tell which village or town people came from by their speech. Dialects were then still living and those of south Suffolk and north Essex were very close. People still called each other by the Old English 'boee', the local version of 'bor', that is, 'neighbour'. Snails were 'hodmedods' and cowslips were 'peggles'. People were never angry, only 'vexed', never 'stupid', but 'daft', and the word 'silly' still had something of the old sense of 'blessed' or



Where I grew up

'touched'. The word 'tie' sounded like 'toy' and 'toy' like 'tie'. And words like 'known' were pronounced as two syllables, like a quick 'no-one.'

You could hear the old people in the streets with their broad accents. I am not sure if people from outside the area would even have understood them. Rarely heard now, their voices sound in my memory like echoes from a lost world. Today you can still hear this dialect, but in Suffolk – the Essex has largely been erased by 'development' and 'progress' from London. From Essex I inherited openness and honesty; from Suffolk suspiciousness, which has enabled me to see through fakery. Both traits of character have been useful.

This was the country; all was quiet, 'normal'. This was no city. I remember the scandal in the little town when some 'London people' came down to live there and divorced. We did not know what divorce was. It was what film stars and 'smart people' in London did. We were innocents. People left their doors unlocked and left out money on their doorsteps overnight for the milkman the next morning. That was fairly universal at the time.

As a child, my first memories went back to when I was just over two years old, the winter of 1958-59. I have only a few memories of where I grew up in a little house in Abbey Lane, 'down the lane', between two farms. Abbey Lane was a track, covered with sand, but still quite rutted. We knew all the farm labourers. They were poor, badly-paid. I saw the last, already retired, cart-horses. One farm kept cows and pigs and had the last milkmaid, because they had not yet bought milking machines. She lived in a tiny thatched cottage in another lane, towards the river and the mill. By the mill were the ruins of a medieval

monastery, an 'Abbey', and the old farmhouse that had been made out of the Abbey. It was all a fairy-tale cottage and lane and a place of wonder to me.

I spent virtually all my childhood 'down the Abbey', meaning in the fields around it. I knew every bump, every spring, every hedgerow, almost every tree there. In 1959 we moved house a few hundred yards away from the Lane. There was a big, overgrown garden, with grass almost as tall as me, and an orchard, with an old privy at the end of the garden. I used to play in the garden and a bird would come and sit on my shoulder and sing. This all seemed so natural. Later I would spend much of my time helping in the garden, digging and weeding, and came to learn much about gardening.

We had no television, car, telephone or refrigerator until later and the floors were covered with lino with a square of carpet in the middle. Like most then, we lived very frugally by today's standards. Like most then, we heated the house with a coal fire in one room. On winter mornings there was ice on the inside of the bedroom and bathroom windows. I remember the winter of 1963 when I would cross the frozen river to go to school. It was frozen for weeks. I wore short trousers to school – like every other boy then. (All the girls wore skirts). I do not remember feeling cold.

However, life there had once been much poorer. My father told us about the poor 1920s, when each member of his family lived off two slices of bread and an oxo mess per day. One neighbour had lived in a cottage with an earth floor and sacks on top of it. They had had no floorboards, let alone lino or a carpet. At that time gypsies would come round with a half-starved dancing bear that would perform in the streets. When my grandmother had a little money in the 1930s, she always used to cook an extra meal because there would be a 'gentleman of the road' (a tramp) who would come asking for food. They were hungry days for many.

Until the mid-1960s the little town received an annual invasion of gypsies who came to do pea-picking. Theirs was still another world and gypsies would come to the door to sell their home-made wooden pegs or tell fortunes. There were still gentlemen of the road and a scissor sharpener who would come with his bicycle, ringing a bell to let you know of his coming. This was still there at the beginning of the 1960s. It now seems a whole century away, but then I suppose it is.

My father had all his roots, going back centuries, as we later discovered, among farm labourers in the same village a mile over the border in Suffolk. (Recently a distant relative told me that from out of this mass of thousands of farm labourer ancestors there had been one who had become a clergyman. This was Rev George Phillips, who in the 1630s had become the first clergyman in Boston, Massachusetts. He must have been an exception). My father's parents had moved down a few miles along the Stour Valley railway line into north Essex during the Kaiser's War and my father had been born in a tiny terraced house in Church Street in the town in 1919. My mother was also from an agricultural family; her grandfather had been a ploughman and horseman all his life. He had never driven a tractor and never eaten tomatoes – which were he said only for 'the gentry'. Much later, in another moment of Revelation, I discovered that apparently she had Non-English origins on her grandmother's side, her mother's mother, whom she had never known and who had died when my mother's mother had been small.

My mother's father (my father's father had died in 1936 and had often been ill) had taken part in the First World War, not in France, but in the Middle East. Probably if he had been sent to France, I would not be here to write these lines. He had been in the Cycle Corps, with Allenby in Jerusalem, in Baghdad and in Thessaloniki. He used to tell us: 'Wherever you go, never go to Baghdad – they'll slit your throat down a sidestreet'. In later life I read the maxim of the Duke of Wellington: 'One country has no right to interfere in the internal affairs of another', and in recent years I have had cause to ponder those words. My grandfather used many now unusual



The Abbey Farmhouse

expressions. For example, he would say, 'I wouldn't do that, not for all the corn in Egypt'. When there was interference on his black and white television, he would blame it on 'the Icelandic teleprinters'.

During the War my father had been in the Eighth Army in North Africa. He had travelled around Africa, by Sierra Leone and the Cape, helping to escort Italian prisoners of war to India. He had many stories to tell. In Egypt he had been wounded, losing his two best friends, and then had crossed to Italy and finished the War in southern Austria. Here he had been struck by the fate of so many orphans and would have stayed and looked after some of them, if that had been possible. 'The War' had been the defining moment of his life. Everything with him was 'before the War' or 'after the War'.

He had seen the class-ridden British Army, its Norman officer class hopelessly out of contact with the ordinary soldier. (Their shameful and shameless saying was, 'My ancestors came over with the Conqueror'). He had left school at 14. After the War, he had returned to the same small seed company in the town where he had been born and worked before the War. All his working life had been spent with just one company.

After the War, having seen what the British Empire in fact was, like so many others from the Armed Forces he had voted Labour. He had been shocked by what he had seen in the once much-vaunted, but exploitative and very cruel Empire. It had all gone on behind our backs. Let us be honest; in reality the average Englishman was little more than a poorly-paid serf; that is why so many had emigrated to get out of it. British troops had been sent to the North African desert, without equipment, rations, arms, their pathetic little tanks with what he called their 'pop-guns' had not stood a chance against the far superior German tanks. So, realities, long-hidden by the British Establishment from the people, dawned on millions of English people. We had been lied to for centuries – and still are.

All my remaining grandparents and very many great-uncles, great-aunts, uncles and aunts told stories about the Wars, both the Kaiser's and Hitler's. My very modest great-uncles and great-aunts lived in a little Suffolk market town, just across the border. They were all true Victorians, born in the 1880s and 1890s, and expressed those values. The men had all worked on the land or at the local clothing factory; the women had all been

'in service' at 'the big house', or else had worked at the same factory. One of my great-uncles had become a butler in this way. They told me how until 1939 they used to kill the family pig every autumn ready for the winter (everyone had a pig at the bottom of their garden in those days and fed it on scraps). It was like that with medieval peasants. Nothing had changed.

As a small child, I remember very clearly sitting with a nineteenth-century great-uncle in the Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds. He was very respectful of the place, taking his cap off – after all it had once been a monastery. All their lives had been marked by the Wars, often tragically. Thus, two great-aunts and two aunts had not married – the men whom they might have married had been killed in those terrible Wars, first the Kaiser's War, then Hitler's War. I remember all the stories of the Wars, which were told again and again. They marked me more than anything.

I remember one story of how my father who, like so many others, had been at Monte Cassino. He told me how a young soldier friend of his had fallen sleep there, exhausted. When he woke up in the morning, the side of his head he had slept on was still dark, but the other side had turned white. On another occasion in Italy, he and others had been the first to arrive at a deserted palace of King Umberto. He and his friends had taken advantage to slide down the banisters of the palace and play billiards on the biggest billiard table they had ever seen.

A neighbour's grandfather had fought in France in the Great War. His helmet lay rusting in his garden and we used to play with it. One of my teachers had been a sailor at Jutland and told us of that ferocious battle. Another neighbour had been a policeman in London during the Blitz. Once he showed me the empty brass case of a German incendiary bomb which he had taken as a souvenir of those awful days.

In this little town in north Essex there were many old people who had their stories to tell. One remembered well the local celebrations for the relief of Mafeking. A favourite expression of hers was, 'that's the beauty of it'. Further back, her grandfather had been told by his grandfather how people no longer lived on the right date. This story, of the calendar change in the mid-eighteenth century, had been handed down like a folk memory to her, in fact not only to her. Among older people, especially the farmers, the old calendar was a reality and they did not like the new



The Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds

calendar. They still did several things on 'Old Michaelmas' and ignored the new one.

There were many whose parents and grandparents had told them of the nineteenth century, even the earlier decades of it. Some even still had something of the eighteenth century about them. I once met someone who had met another who had met one who had been at Waterloo. Later, in France, I was to meet a very old lady whose grandmother had told her how as a small girl she had seen Napoleon riding through Versailles on his horse. I had no reason to disbelieve her, just as I had no reason to disbelieve others, also in Paris, who told me of their meetings, as adults, with the Russian Royal Family well before the Revolution.

There were many such people in the village then, all very individual, all 'characters'. An old man who lived in a nearby village told me how the whole village had rushed down to the road in about 1900 to see the first 'motor-carriage'. By the late 1960s, when he told me that, there were hundreds of them going by every hour. An old lady had attended Queen Victoria's funeral ('everything was draped in black'). Another old lady, nearly 100 years old, always dressed in a long black dress. She must have been born in the 1860s. Another was said to be a witch. We were frightened of her.

As a child when I was four years old, I was always 'writing' in wavy lines, I was always with a pen and paper in my hand. I was very shy; writing was my self-expression. Later I also liked books which told me facts and I saw that I had a surprising memory for certain facts. I seemed to soak them up, to absorb them, like blotting paper soaked up ink.

My parents were ordinary people. They called spades spades and had no time for conceitedness, pretentiousness or pompousness of any sort. No mumbo-jumbo here, only practicality. This was good in one way, but once people took only this to live by, it made them worldly and narrow, resistant to any kind of spiritual experience, the life of the spirit. I remember as a child returning home 'up the hill' on a cold frosty winter's evening, the full moon up, the damp earth asleep, and seeing the stars in the crisp sky and wondering what life there might be beyond them. Others did not seem to wonder in that way, or if they did, they soon forgot to do it once they had grown up. That is a pity.

My parents did not attend any church and my father was not baptized, nor any of his sisters. My mother had been baptized ('christened') when she was eight. I did not 'believe' in God then. Rather I knew Him. He was next to me, all around, in a whole series of presences that I could feel. People called me 'intense' and 'single-minded'. But how could I not be, when I felt so deeply this other-worldly Presence as my destiny? Of course, I could not express or understand all this at that time, but later I would seek the understanding of it all.

It was also then that I developed a very strong sense of place, of atmosphere, the sense of all the historic and spiritual presences in different places, wherever they were, their spiritual identities, if you will. I believe that every place has its own spirit, which is composed of the spirits of all those who have lived there and their doings. Those spirits speak to us, if we are willing to listen to them and, especially, if we pray for their rest.

Together with this came the ability to enter inside them all, to feel for them and the people who had lived and still lived there, or rather, to feel with them. I felt that I was with all people, living or departed, I was inside them. I felt the interconnectedness of all people and all things, their inner unity. All ages and all peoples mystically came together at these moments. This will be revealed to us all in full only at the Last Judgement. Someone much later said that this inner sight had given me a poet's soul.

This sense of empathy has been very heavy to bear; it has left little parts of my soul scattered all around the world and with many people, wherever I have been, even if only briefly. But I also carry parts of their souls and places with me. They are all interconnected, because they are all the work of the same Creator. It works both ways. I am with all of them and they are all with me. Empathy has no



frontiers of space or time, with it we travel through both. In fact, empathy is a reflection of catholicity. Our hearts are meant to feel for all suffering humanity, all the lost and sinful and hopeless, all those in darkness and the shadow of death.

So I was aware of another reality, of Paradise, of Wisdom and Beauty just beyond. This knowledge or awareness of the deathless Beauty of the other world, making this world a sacrament of the other world, has transfigured my whole life and given me an understanding, much different to that of most. It gave me a sense of the meaning of things and their true purpose, a course, a star, a destiny. I never asked for this waking from the dead, this 'bread for the soul', I never sought it, but this undying source of life is a reality and I cannot deny it. To deny it would be to deny my own soul, to deny reality, to deny God, Whose presence was – and is – everywhere. God is not a belief, He is a living experience, life itself.

All this is why at difficult moments in life I have always referred back to the anchor of childhood – a lodestar guiding me through life's many pitfalls. It seems to me that many of the tragedies of the world, both past and present, come from the fact that many have not had childhoods, as they have been stolen by criminals, politicians, military men and, today, the media. Therefore many are deprived of anchors and lodestars to guide them in later life.

2. Growing: The Third One 1963–1968

Holy is the Lord our God.

Nigh on fifty years ago, in August 1963, I was cast out of my childhood Paradise. Eden was shut to me, the source was dry; no water ran here. I do not know how or why this was so. I can think of no

specific reason for this. Although I had only the consciousness of a child, I felt so keenly the resulting sense of exile, the loss of childhood simplicity and faith. I had no support, no answers to questions. I had to work everything out for myself.

Perhaps all this sense of loss, this sense of being an outsider, an external observer, is why I have always felt for exiles, in fact marrying one and living amid many others. I suppose that I have spent the rest of my life trying to get back into Paradise, especially through the saints. This is why I call this part of my life 'The Third One'. I was always the third one, the one who did not fit into the simple two. I was always in the middle. I was the third child of a mother who was the third child and of a father who was a third child ... How could I not be third?

My eldest brother, departed this life suddenly when relatively young, was nine years older than me. He lived for farming and, leaving school as soon as possible, worked on a farm, eventually becoming a farm manager. He was intensely practical, loved machinery and could take apart tractors and put them back together again. He could drive and repair every machine, from combine harvesters to steam engines. My elder brother is six years older than me. With a scientific mind, he studied, became a physicist and worked in a totally different area, in nuclear power.

At this time I became ever more conscious of 'the War'. It was after all less than twenty years before. A Lancaster bomber still stood on a disused runway not so far away. Memories were still raw. Every year people remembered 6 June, D-Day. I remember especially 6 June 1966 – 6/6/66. Everyone spoke about France. That country held a fascination for me; it was the place of the mysterious French Resistance. People disliked Germany; on seeing anyone who was very thin, my mother would call him 'a Belsen victim'. However, people hated Japan and refused to buy anything 'Made in Japan', because so many local men of the Fourth and Fifth Battalions of the Suffolk Regiment had become Japanese prisoners of war and starved or been tortured to death. Some of them had marched off British ships straight into Japanese imprisonment at Singapore in 1942. And very many of them had never come back home. What sadness. And what inhuman incompetence on the part of the British authorities!

There were four stories which I remember from this time and which marked me. One soldier, a Major, had been fighting in Burma against the

Japanese. He had been faced with a decision to let a few British soldiers, closely followed by the Japanese, cross a vital bridge – or blow up the bridge. He had blown up the bridge. I think he had suffered from that decision for the rest of his life. Another time a friend who had served in the desert with my father told us how there had been a very cruel British sergeant who had been hated by all his soldiers. Advancing towards the German lines he had been killed – shot in the back ... Another man had been in submarines. Nearly every night he woke up screaming believing that the submarine had been hit and he was about to drown. Another one had spent nearly all the War in a POW camp in Germany. In 1945 he was finally freed by 'Mongol' soldiers – who took a terrible toll on the German guards...

I also became fascinated by the German War with Russia and even quite knowledgeable about it through reading. I think my fascination with it came from the childhood intuition that here had been played out the destiny of Europe, the result of the Russian Revolution, which had been the real turning-point in the history of Europe and so the whole world, because everything had come from the Western urge to destroy Orthodox Russia. The Second War in Western Europe had only been a sideshow, however important locally. The real war had been in Russia. Decades later I heard of a Russian soldier who had been in the Reichstag at the end of the War and there had seen Tsar Nicholas II, surveying what the Soviet soldiers had done to those who had started the First War, which had led to the Revolution. Then my childhood intuitions at last all made sense. I also remember a BBC programme about Rasputin at this time (perhaps this was on the fiftieth anniversary, in 1966). It contained all the usual anti-Russian mythology, of which I had no understanding then, but even as a child, I became instinctively much interested in this period.

At this time too I became conscious of a level of local existence which was much older than the immediate one. I became aware of the roots of the land where I lived and had been born. I became conscious that there was a much older England, the England of the Old Saints, and of a mysterious thing called 'Holiness'. Nearby, there were names of saints, A mysterious St Edmund, another called St Albright, then St Osyth, but nobody could tell me anything about them, except that they had all lived 'a very long time ago'. I realised that I lived in a world which had forgotten its saints. Only later

did I comprehend the profound and deforming tragedy of this.

They had all been forsaken, and yet I sensed that such bright figures, beings of beauty, were much closer to reality, to truth, more in tune with Paradise, than anyone in my own time. So I began to try and reclaim this lost knowledge, the knowledge of the saints. They came to me like echoes from a far distant past. The past was speaking to me. This was one of many such experiences. In this I felt my destiny.

In 1965, through reading at primary school, I became aware of King Alfred, about whom I wrote then. Little did I think that nearly fifty years later I would compose an Orthodox service to him. In 1966 there was the 900th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings. I wondered: How could the English 'celebrate' their own defeat and the ensuing catastrophe? Why did they call their Christian ancestors 'Saxons' or 'Anglo-Saxons' when they were clearly English – the name they gave themselves? Surely this anniversary was an occasion for national mourning, time to put things right? Things began to fall into place in my mind and I realised that much of what we had been told and much that was in books and newspapers was a delusion, a manipulation. I began to mistrust; my instincts told me the truth beyond.

From this there began a lifelong interest in pre-Norman, in fact, as I would later discover, Pre-Schism, England, as well as its remnants and vestiges, like Robin Hood. I wanted to know the origin of all things, to recover lost or forgotten knowledge, to touch the roots of everything, to get to what is radical. I wanted to know the hidden and lost past and its significance. I wanted to penetrate into the essence of things, to discover their inner meaning, to know the spiritual significance of all things, to discover what I later came to call 'Essential England' or 'Eternal England'. I wanted to know the reasons for all things. Perhaps this is why I have always disliked fakes, I have generally seen through them quickly, instinctively. I have always been surprised how highly educated people cannot see such fakery.

At that time I do not think I ever heard a swear word. In fact, I only began hearing them later in life and only discovered the meaning of some of them in my 20s. Today schools, like everyday life, are full of foul language. Innocence has been lost.

I was the keeper of old ways, the one of secret places, hidden things, haunting and saintly

presences all around me, in villages and fields and woods, in the mysterious skies and on deserted coasts. But still a child, I could not make sense of any of this. All was intuition only. But these intuitions flooded me with inner knowledge and the thirst for more. I could see the door and sense what was behind it, but I did not then have the key to unlock it.

In 1967 I passed my 11+ exam and so was admitted to the local Grammar School in Colchester.

3. Revelation: The Wind from the East 1968–1974

For behold, thou hast loved truth; the hidden and secret things of Thy wisdom hast Thou revealed to me.

The previous period had lasted five years; this one was to last six years. In August 1968, when I was 12, I saw a film at a cinema with my parents. It was only the third time I had been to a cinema in my life. The film was called *Dr Zhivago*. Although I understood little of the story, at once from the opening funeral scene, I felt that here was something special and yet also intensely familiar and intimately known to me from long ago. It was as though I had from the very beginning of my life been there in my soul, in that lost world of the Russia of before. It seemed to me that the voices singing 'Eternal Memory' in that scene had been singing in my soul all my life. I began to sense possible answers to my many questions, seekings and wonderings.

Later, this sense made me wonder about 'reincarnation'. I came to the conclusion that this does not exist; it is an illusion and a distraction. However, what is true, I believe, is that we may be tuned into other voices, living and departed, which speak to our souls, if they are on the same wavelength as our own souls and we are on theirs. True, I had not lived before, but those who had lived before were now speaking to me because I felt for them. They were asking us to pray for them, calling to us. And in that sense I had lived before – through them.

From this I later felt how important it is to pray for the past, to pray for any who had died before us. I remember a dear aunt saying how she would walk along streets in our little town and she had known someone who had died more or less in each house. Now I find I can do something similar, as I pass by many houses, including her house, and

pray for her. My heart and mind are haunted by a gallery of portraits and their extraordinary and ordinary destinies – all those who have gone beyond now. One thing I have always liked to do is to wander through cemeteries and pray for the people buried there. I can summon up and feel their lives, their histories, which are pregnant with meaning. I have the feeling that they answer me back and I have had several experiences in this way. I hope that perhaps I will find my salvation in this way, being forgiven for my sins through praying for the departed.

It was in a field in Colchester in October 1968 that the next revelation came to me. I can remember the exact spot; I was facing east. It was very strange. A voice said: 'Learn Russian'. The inexplicable spiritual longing in me began to be filled. Forty years later I went back to that place and wondered at God's Providence that had opened a Russian Orthodox church in that very town, a mile away, and put me there to serve in it, after so many years overseas and so far from that place. It was as if I had been prevented and thwarted from being there all those long years, yet this was my destiny, simply what God had wanted from me all along. But how complicated to get there!

In fact my destiny had already been written, but I had to go away and learn and also struggle against many in order to ready myself to live freely that destiny, which was all interwoven and intertwined with Russia. This revelation of October 1968 changed my life, because it was not about a language, but about a Faith and a way of life – and the only one which would make any sense of all that had gone before.

So I began teaching myself Russian. I had always been intrigued by its alphabet and by pre-Revolutionary postage stamps. I also interested myself in Russian history, culture, literature and history, especially the mysteries of the Revolution and the Second War. Why, for instance, that deluded attraction to Marx, whose writings I also read then? I read the book '*Dr Zhivago*' and knew most of the poems in that novel by heart. Pasternak also had the same sense of place and people as me, the empathetic sense of 'being with them all'. I had also always been intrigued by the invasion of Russia and the Second World War and by the meeting of Russians and Americans, East and West, at the end of the War. All was destiny. At this time, the childhood premonition that France and especially Paris would play a part in my life also grew inside me.

At the same time, another revelation came back to me very strongly – that there is a God. I 'saw' Him in vision, keenly sensing Him in the fields, the trees, the grass, the sky – all the brightness of my old childhood intuitions was renewed in me again after over five years of loss, but even more strongly and intensely and above all more consciously than before. The Beauty of Paradise was just there, just beyond, just on the other side of the hill, just beyond the sky and I knew that my heart could speak to God and He to me and His lovely spirits spoke to me also. I discovered that the heart was like a receiver of messages. God spoke to my heart and I saw His Beauty in His Creation. Only now, no longer a child, my mind was working. I wanted to understand or at least express this unearthly reality, this deathless world of Divine Wisdom and Beauty. The thinking mind is always reshaped by the living Beauty of Wisdom, which makes the soul vibrate like the strings of a violin. Then it refashions the soul and the mind and all its values.

At that time I became very interested in languages, literature, politics and history at that time. Apart from Russian, I was to study Latin, French and German at school until I was 18, and other languages which I studied at home, mainly Slav languages, especially Polish, Ukrainian and Czech. At that time Marx was fashionable among those older than myself. But even I could see that revolutions were pointless. The only true revolution could be spiritual revolution, one which modified the personality. This is called repentance. I was also interested then in military history, more precisely, for some then quite unknown reason, in the Crimean War. I did not know the role that this would later play in my life. Everything is Providential – nothing is ever wasted.

I also began to study religion and understood something of Non-Christian Faiths. Simply put, whatever their values as moral codes or rites, they have no Resurrection. Their leaders are all dead. Only Christ is living. I read the New Testament for the first time in my life, and then the Old Testament. By the time I was fourteen, it had become clear that I was a Christian, so I bought a neck cross to wear. But what was Christianity? The church buildings I had visited were for me empty – bare white walls. There was no presence of the Risen Christ in them.

Two verses from the New Testament impressed me greatly at this time and still do so now. The first was: 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added

unto you' (Matt 6, 33). The second was: 'The foolishness of God is wiser than men' (1 Cor 1, 25). Both verses completely negated the values of 'Western', 'Judeo-Christian' civilisation.

I knew nothing about churches, none of the technical vocabulary. I had no idea what a bishop was, or a nave, or a chalice and had certainly never heard of ecumenism. I was completely ignorant, a blank sheet. I knew from school assemblies of Protestant hymns with what seemed to me to be their boring Victorian moralising and tired and sentimental tunes. They had little value for me. A Protestant told me that they 'did not have saints' and he was proud of this. To me all Protestantism was therefore disqualified. In any case, my sense of history and sympathy for past generations, for whom I prayed, meant that I could never be part of a religion or any sect founded 1500 years after Christ. I wanted the religion that was founded by Christ, the Risen Master of Life and Death, not some all too human, recent substitutes.



My native town and its town hall. St Helen stands on top holding the Cross, facing Jerusalem, where she found it

As for Catholicism, how could it be acceptable, when it had begun only in the Middle Ages and had by its excesses given birth to Protestantism? How could anyone belong to a religion that had been responsible for the barbarianism of the Crusades and the Inquisition? In any case, how could English people be Catholic, when Catholicism was the very force that had devastated the country under the Normans? It too appeared to be an all too human invention of the Middle Ages, a compromise, 'a medieval con-trick', as my eldest brother had said of it. Where was the eternal perspective in any of this, where was the continuity from Christ, without all this chop and change, one century Catholic, the next Protestant? These were in any case only exclusive, local, cultural and racial traditions: the Latin peoples had their Catholicism; the Germanic peoples had their Protestantism.

What of the first millennium? What of this mysterious 'Early Church', founded in Jerusalem, not in Rome or Geneva or Canterbury, and which was so clearly neither Catholic nor Protestant? There were no native Catholics or Protestants in Jerusalem, only foreigners and pilgrims. The native people were something else. What was their faith? And what of Christ's words, that He had founded the Church and that the gates of hell would not prevail? Where was the Church? How could it be in Western civilisation, of which Gandhi, whose biography I read then, had said, 'I think Western civilisation is 'a very good idea''. A 'Church' which had founded the civilisation that had invented two World Wars, the Atomic Bomb and now M.A.D. (Mutually Assured Destruction) could not be the Church.

Then I realised, only thanks to my knowledge of Russian culture, that I had not been to a Russian church. I discovered that this church was the major part of something called 'the Orthodox Church', about which I knew nothing. However, I did find an academic book about it written by an ex-Anglican. From it, for some reason, I noted that there was a Russian seminary in Paris. When I was fifteen, I conceived the idea that one day I would go there to learn more. At that time I became aware in some sense of the Holy Trinity and saw all Creation in threes.

Despite this book and for me its strange approach, much of which I did not understand, forty years ago, in autumn 1972 I at last had the opportunity, as the result of a Russian study course which I had been awarded, to go to such a church.

As soon as I had crossed the threshold into that little, now disappeared chapel in Oxford, I felt at home, as though I had always been there, but had been prevented all my life from being there by forces, great and small, external to me. I felt that I had been artificially cut off from my destiny, thwarted from entering into my home. I felt too that this Faith was, despite its Russianness, universal. Potentially not only had I found my place, but I felt that others, from all sorts of cultures and backgrounds, could also be fed by all this. I did not wish to belong to something that was not potentially universal.

Already in summer 1972, I had won a bursary to travel to Russia, to Moscow, St Petersburg, Novgorod and from there to Kiev. I visited churches. In Novgorod I had had the sensation that I had been there before. This was a special place to me. Again a question of wavelengths and souls. I saw the beauty of Old Russia and saw how Communism had disfigured and uglified everything, especially in Moscow. I especially admired the old parts of Moscow, on the other side of the River Moskva, where I felt so much at home. The key to Russia, I saw, was in her Faith. Without the Orthodox Faith, she was nothing, just a space on a map.

At that time I began to go to Collet's Russian bookshop in Museum Street in London to buy Russian books, then a field of battle between MI5 and the KGB. On one of these trips, I visited the Russian Cathedral in London and a priest gave me a prayerbook in Slavonic. But my parents said that I could not join this 'strange' church until I was 18. I knew that I would have to wait, to continue to be patient. It was frustrating, because I knew that this was my home, my destiny. The devil would stop at nothing to trip me up and prevent me from realising this destiny. So I began reading other books about the Church. Some I ordered from the local library, others I read at Essex University library,



Novgorod



Sergei Rakhmaninov

where I had a permit to go and where there was then an extensive Russian department.

It was at this time, apart from literature, that I discovered Russian music, especially Rakhmaninov. Years later, in Paris, I was to meet one who had known him well. He had been born on 20 March, a date that, most strangely, was also later to play a part in my destiny.



Alexander Vertinsky



Vera Lynn

I also later discovered that my father's beloved singer, the wartime Vera Lynn, the English Rose, had been born on that date too. Then I also discovered the Russian musician and cabaret singer, Alexander Vertinsky – born on 21 March. He, or rather his music, would also play a role in my later life, his songs about exile telling me about the people I was with. Later, in France, I was to discover another singer, Edith Piaf. More than her songs what impressed me was her life. She had come from nothing to fame through her talent, against all odds. I remember seeing her wedding at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Paris on television. Her husband remained faithful to her all his life. Her personality had cast a spell over him and many others.

I had always written. In those years, like others of that age, I had begun writing poetry. Ideas, or rather feelings and intuitions, would come to me, even in the night, and I would have to get up to write them down. I never sought to write anything – it all just came to me. I just had to check everything to see that it was all factually correct.



Paris, Notre Dame

This is still the case. In 1973 I wrote a short book about Orthodoxy. In July 1974 I won a French essay competition of the Alliance Francaise. I had written in French about the Russian Orthodox Faith and its future role in the world. The prize – there were six winners in the UK – was ten days in Paris with guided tours of all the well-known sights. Between four and six students came from very many countries all over Europe – there were about 100 of us in all. I will always be grateful for this experience. I had never been to France before. My destiny was an unwinding thread.

I did not find any churches there, except for one. Here I was misled; I had thought that it was a Russian church – in fact it was the Russian Uniat church. Again I had been deceived from meeting my future. Here, in Paris, was part of the unfolding of my destiny, as I had felt it as a premonition, even as a child. I have always had strong presentments, the sense of premonition. In Paris I felt the overpowering sense of destiny, of my future. While there I took the opportunity to go to a Russian bookshop. There I did manage to buy two significant Russian books: a Slavonic Gospel book and Kartashov's 'The Re-Creation of Holy Rus'. Sad to say, they were both still available, unsold. It suggested that Paris Russians were not very interested in either.

The trip to Paris was, as I only discovered later, a series of lost opportunities, the missed rendez-vous of an innocent abroad. There was no internet in those days. Had I had some guidance in England beforehand, I could have met Fr Alexander Trubnikoff in the Russian parish of Meudon, south of Paris. In fact I would meet him only at the very end of his life, some twelve years later. Later still I would come to know his writings and his thoughts from sorting through his archives. Later still his daughter gave me his Easter cassock. It fits me perfectly and I am proud to wear it in his memory, the priest whom I never knew in this world, but would have learned so much from. Here I would have learned more about the true White Russia and its noble ideal of Faith (Orthodoxy), the Tsar, the last Orthodox Christian Roman Emperor, and Holy Rus (the peoples of the Orthodox Empire). I would have understood the universal significance of all this and not the London version of it which was debased into mere Russian nationalism.

Here I would have met heavenly paths. But from this I was later to learn that when we miss chances because we are not ready for them, God gives us other ones, because He is merciful and loves mankind. God gives us other paths later. This is important to know. Life is made up of a series of parallel destinies and alternative paths. All intertwine through the Providence of God, which is the result of the prayer of the Church. If we miss one, God gives us another one. It is not our fault that we have no guidance in life. In this way our regrets are not too great to bear for us.

I also had to understand that if I had not made mistakes, then certainly I would not know now what I know now. If we use mistakes wisely, they can be made into knowledge and into advice for ourselves and for others, in order to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

I returned from Paris and that summer I worked on a local farm to earn some money.

... to be continued

ORTHODOXY SHINES THROUGH WESTERN MYTHS (11)

Medieval Europe

OLDER Western scholarship on Church history is not generally of much use to Orthodox. Most of it is simply anti-Orthodox and therefore anti-authentic Christianity, even openly boasting of its 'Judeo-Christian' and not Christian civilization. The anti-Orthodox

prejudices of such scholarship, when it mentions Orthodoxy at all, come simply from the fact that history is 'written by the winners', and even despite the First World War, up until the Second World War most Western scholars thought that the West had won.

It is different today, when the near-millennial crimes of the West are visible to all and nobody any longer listens to the voices of ecclesiastical institutions which moulded the last thousand years of Western history – they are clearly compromised. Interestingly, contemporary secular scholarship, which in its ignorance of Orthodoxy cannot in any way be accused of being pro-Orthodox, is an excellent source for Orthodox to understand what went wrong with the West. We can understand how, by renouncing the Orthodox Christian Faith in its anti-Trinitarian and anti-Christic *filioque* heresy, its former Church became a series of isms, Catholicism, Protestantism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism etc, which have bred modern-day secularism and will eventually lead to the end of the world.

In the following article, the sixth in a series taken from various works of secular scholarship, we have selected extracts from *Medieval Europe* by Martin Scott, Longmans, 1964. These abundantly illustrate the post-Orthodox deformations of Western culture which began with the spread of the new *filioque* culture behind the Papacy.

Although ominously threatened for nearly three centuries before, under Charlemagne, these deformations were not definitively implemented until the eleventh century. The date of 1054 is thus seen to be symbolic of the very real spiritual fall which took place in Western Europe in the eleventh century. In the year 1000, the fall had by no means been certain. In 1054 it was. And it is that fall which has defined the subsequent history of not just Western Europe, but the whole world. But let the learned author speak:

p. 4–5. Rome did not fall until 1453.

Indeed, throughout the Middle Ages (New Rome) was to remain a large city even by modern standards; at no stage before the twelfth century had it less than half a million inhabitants, and for much of the time it probably numbered around the million mark. The West never had anything to compare with this. Moreover, the Byzantine Empire deliberately preserved Roman traditions and methods of government for the whole long course of its history. It was natural therefore that the collapse of the Empire in the West should seem not to be the collapse of the Roman Empire, but merely the temporary loss of its western provinces. The career of the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century must have strengthened the belief in the

probable reconquest of the lost provinces by Roman legions...

The idea of the Roman Empire, of one single political authority based on a new or old Rome, holding sway over all local authorities and backed by the authority of God Himself, is one of the great constants of medieval history; it is as clear to Dante in the fourteenth century as it had been to Prudentius in the fifth. Yet the search for anything that is recognizable as the classical empire in the Middle Ages can lead only to Byzantium (*sic*).

p. 77. The 'Holy Roman Empire' could only ever be national and German = provincial.

A bargain was to be struck with the eastern peoples. No longer were they simply to be subjugated by the force of German arms; if they were prepared to accept Catholicism and acknowledge themselves members of the Empire, in return they would be allowed to retain their full rights as independent peoples. An example of this policy can be seen in his treatment of the Magyars. St Stephen of Hungary († 1038), who had been converted to Christianity in 995, undertook the conversion of the Magyar peoples. In return he was allowed to organize the Christian kingdom of Hungary, which took its place among the Christian peoples of the Empire.

It is difficult not to admire this more humane approach to the eastern problem (*sic*). But it had a very serious practical disadvantage. The Empire had been accepted in Germany as an effective bulwark against the enemies in the East. The spectacle of an emperor fraternizing with these very enemies was bound to undermine German confidence in the Empire; yet, although Otto might style himself Imperator Romanorum or *Servus Jesu Christi*, unless he remained also king of the Germans he was nothing. Even the German Church, accustomed by now to regard itself as the chief prop of royal power, resented the way its claims to a favoured position were ignored in this new pursuit of a universal Christendom.

Naturally a Roman emperor should rule from Rome, but Otto's attempts to make Italy the centre of his government endeared him no more to Italians than to Germans. His first appearance on the Italian scene came in 996, in the by now traditional manner; he was summoned by Pope John XV (985–996) to set him free from the domination of a Roman family, the Crescendi. Death had freed the pope from his troubles before Otto

reached Rome, but when he got there he secured the election as next pope of Bruno of Carinthia, who took the title Gregory V (996–999). His choice could hardly have been more unfortunate. The new pope was well under the canonical age, being only twenty-three, and the unpopularity of this youthful German was increased by the fact that he was the Emperor's cousin.

p. 82. The Difficulty of Renewal given the Secularization of the Monasteries in the West.

Most serious of all was the difficulty of bringing about any reform in a church which was so localized. Once a parish or a diocese had become corrupt under an incumbent who was unable to stand up to a greedy or violent lay lord, or who was himself incompetent or immoral, how could it be reformed? Rome offered no hope; it was much too far away, and in any case for much of the period was a glaring example of the faults which most needed correction. In many ages the monasteries were looked to for the provision of spiritual men of ability to reform the Church outside the cloister, but now the monasteries were as closely involved in the process of secularization as any other part of the Church.

... By the tenth century the western Church had reached a very low ebb. To give but one example, in 936 the abbot of the great Benedictine house of Farfa in the Sabine hills had been murdered by two of his monks. The guilty pair then proceeded to rule the abbey themselves in an uneasy dyarchy; for a number of years they continued to use up the abbey revenues for the sustenance of their mistresses and numerous illegitimate offspring. Farfa was no great distance from Rome, and it might be expected that here at any rate the Papacy might be able to undertake a drastic reform. But the Rome of the tenth century could reform nothing; its popes were the feeble creatures of lay princes, succeeding each other in a bewildering succession of intrigues and murders. For a time the scene was dominated by the figure of Marozia, who saw both her son and her grandson made pope. If she was not the notorious harlot of Gibbon's imagination the period well deserves the scorn Gibbon was later to heap on it in one of his most brilliantly ironic passages. Until the reformation carried out by Otto the Great the western Church was most rotten at its core.

p. 110. How the Triumph of the former Church in the West was also its Downfall.

(The death of Henry IV in 1106) marked the end of that stage of the conflict when the real issue was not investiture, but the question of who should govern Europe. The German Emperor as God's appointed guardian for the Church on Earth was now no longer a political possibility; the question had become one of whether he could hope to control Germany. This represented a great triumph for the papal idea. The possibility that the Papacy might in fact be set over the nations to do justice and punish iniquity had suddenly become real. It was the more impressive in that this victory had been won in part at least by the real association of Rome with righteousness. Yet it was a victory which concealed grave dangers for the future. However, it might be won, political power could not be kept except by political means; Gregory VII's dealings with the Normans had already shown this. In Canossa the historian can see not only the promise of the might of Innocent III, but a warning of the downfall of Boniface VIII. Christ's Vicar on Earth was now fatally concerned with the things that are Cæsar's.

pp. 208. The 'Christian' West sacks the Capital of Christendom.

At this (the installation of an Orthodox Emperor in early 1204) the Latin army lost patience and successfully stormed the city. Its capture was followed by a disgraceful orgy of looting, arson, and rapine. The crusading army, whose discipline had steadily deteriorated during the months of enforced idleness in the suburbs, lost all control and indulged themselves to the full.

The sack of Byzantium (*sic*) is the most shameful episode in the whole history of the Christian West. When the smoke had cleared it could be seen that these knights dedicated to the service of Christ had succeeded in destroying much of the most populous and cultivated city of Christendom ... Nor did it even achieve its purposes from the western point of view. It had been planned to replace the destroyed empire with a new Latin Empire of Constantinople. This was set up under Baldwin, Count of Flanders, but it was to have a short and unhappy existence. It never succeeded in winning the outlying provinces of the Empire or in commending itself in any way to the Greek population. It could only be maintained by constant help from the West, and none lamented

its passing in 1261. It had been hoped that the destruction of the Byzantine Empire would lead to a reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches (*sic*), for the new Patriarch of Constantinople was to be in communion with Rome. In practice it had exactly the reverse effect. What the Greeks had seen of Latin Christianity in action made the hope of reunion between the Churches far more distant. That a crusade could turn to this finally discredited the crusading movement; in the future it was only a man like S. Louis, living almost consciously in the past, who could recapture any of the old religious fervour for serving God with the sword. The Fourth Crusade weakened the defences of Europe in the East, defences which had stayed

intact for a thousand years. That Constantinople (*sic*) fell to the Turks in 1453 must be blamed at least in part on the Fourth Crusade. On the other side of the balance Venice alone would seem to have profited, and that only in the comparatively short run. In the political arrangements made in 1204 Dandolo secured for his city the concession of a large portion of Constantinople (*sic*) and a variety of trading outposts in the eastern Mediterranean, so that her control of eastern trade was for the time secure. He at least emerges from the events of 1203–1204 having shown shrewd intelligence; the rest of the crusaders had been both wicked and stupid.

2. COLLECTIVISATION IN ENGLAND: THE ENCLOSURES

(For Part 1, see 'The Highland Clearances' in OE June 2013)

Stop to consider how the so-called owners of the land got hold of it. They simply seized it by force, afterwards hiring lawyers to provide them with title-deeds. In the case of the enclosure of the common lands, which was going on from about 1600 to 1850, the land-grabbers did not even have the excuse of being foreign conquerors; they were quite frankly taking the heritage of their own countrymen, upon no sort of pretext except that they had the power to do so.

*George Orwell, 'As I Please',
Tribune, 18 August 1944*

Introduction

REMEMBER in the 1970s hearing how the wife of the later Fr Vladimir Rodzianko (later Bishop Basil) referred to how she called Yorkshire farmers 'peasants'. Her remark caused us hilarity, as we imagined the reaction of Yorkshire farmers. However, visiting countries both in Western and Eastern Europe, it is a puzzle to see that they all have 'peasants' and a more or less (with globalisation, increasingly less) intact way of life, dress and customs. The British Isles alone do not have peasants – only farmers and farm labourers. Moreover, in France, as elsewhere, the term 'paysan' (peasant) denotes an honourable and even often admired profession and status. But not in the British Isles, where 'peasant' is a term of abuse. Why?

Before answering this question, we also have to consider that peasants, in English now an insult, throughout Europe were traditionally always the backbone of the Church. They were the class that provided a great many monks, nuns, priests and many saints. This is ironic, because in ancient Roman times, the word 'peasant' meant a 'pagan', since it was only the 'urbane' (from the Latin 'urbs', a city), 'civilised' (from the Latin *civis*, a town) and 'polite' (from the Greek 'polis', a city) who were Christians. Yet, in our times the loss of a peasant class has always been a spiritual disaster for every nation.

For instance, in the atheist Soviet Union, the main process in the destruction of the Christian peasantry (in Russian, 'Krestyanstvo' or 'Christendom') was 'collectivisation'. This meant that the State stole the peasants' land and with it created 'collective' farms. Millions were slaughtered in this forced and violent attack on the peasant ('Christian') way of life. Collectivisation meant farms were effectively run by feudal-style local Communist agents, in fact it was a type of privatisation. This was no more than feudalisation, enserfment of the countryside. The process led to the deaths of millions who naturally resisted this massive State land grab, but it also utterly demotivated the survivors.

Still today one of the weakest points in ex-Communist countries is agriculture. Those country people, collective farm workers, who did not leave for the cities, became utterly demotivated and uninterested in working for the State. Very many of

them became alcoholics, losing all tradition of working the land responsibly. However, collectivisation also took place in Western Europe and it took place in England and the British Isles far earlier than anywhere else. However, here this process was not called collectivisation. Although organised and legalised by the State, 'collectivisation' in Britain meant 'privatisation' and this process in England was known as 'the enclosures'. What were they?

The Enclosures before the Seventeenth Century

Enclosure is the fencing or hedging off of 'common' or 'open' land – the end of traditional rights for all 'commoners' to use the land. The process began with the Norman Occupation and the establishments of 'forests', i.e. artificially created wasteland which were reserved for aristocrats to hunt on. The most famous of these was 'The New Forest', which involved destroying some 90 villages and evicting their inhabitants, simply so that the Norman élite could make sport. Today, this would be called 'ethnic cleansing' and indeed enclosure, like twentieth-century collectivisation, was often accompanied by the bloodshed of English people. Rich Establishment landowners, often of Norman origin, used their control of the State processes to take public land for their private benefit. This was and is theft, the continuation of the Norman Conquest through Norman Occupation.

Nevertheless, enclosure only started to become widespread in the 16th century under the Tudors, when it took place to encourage profitable sheep farming. Enclosures during this period resulted in the destruction of whole villages. This created unemployment, the displacement of the rural poor and decreased domestic grain production, which made England more prone to famine and inflated grain prices. Enclosure was responsible for some of the social problems affecting England at the time, especially theft.

Therefore, in the 16th and early 17th centuries, the practice of enclosure by aristocrats and merchants was at first denounced by both Church and State. Reflecting royal opposition to the practice, the anti-enclosure acts of 1489 and 1516 aimed to stop enclosure by the greedy capitalists, for it would lead to lower tax revenues, fewer conscripts and more potential rebels. Nevertheless, after the Reformation, which weakened the Church and was also effectively itself a land grab,

enclosures occurred more and more and angry tenants, impatient to reclaim pastures, destroyed the enclosures. Beginning with Kett's rebellion in Norfolk in 1549, peasant revolts swept through the country and other revolts occurred periodically down the century.

The Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries

In 1607 riots took place against the continuing enclosure of common land. Known as 'The Midland Revolt', these drew considerable support. It is recorded that women and children took part in the rioting and protests, which ended with some 40–50 deaths and the ringleaders being hanged and quartered. However, the real turning-point came a few years later with the English Civil War, which was the successful attempt by middle class landlords to seize power from the monarchy and aristocrats. The puritanical and business-loving rebels, led by the English Lenin, Cromwell, were financed by money men in the Netherlands. The Civil War gave a major acceleration to enclosure. The Parliamentary leaders supported the rights of landlords against the King, whose Star Chamber court, abolished in 1641, had impeded enclosure.

By dealing a crippling blow to the monarchy, the Civil War paved the way for the eventual rise to power in the eighteenth century of landowners and their 'Parliamentary' system. This was not democratic at all, but simply legalised and justified theft by landlords through decrees of their talking-shop Parliament. The economics of enclosures also changed. Whereas earlier land had been enclosed in order to make it available for sheep farming, by 1650 the steep rise in wool prices had come to an end. From here on, the focus moved to new agricultural techniques, including fertiliser, new crops and crop rotation, all of which greatly increased the profitability of large-scale farms. The Civil War led directly to the inglorious and unbloodless English Revolution of 1688 and the overthrow of the legitimate King through a huge but little-resisted invasion from the Netherlands. In reality it simply led to many of the same processes that France would endure after its Revolution in 1789 and Russia after its Revolution in 1917.

The 'enclosure' movement probably peaked between 1760 and 1832. By the latter date it had essentially completed the destruction of the peasant community. These enclosures were implemented by means of local acts of Parliament, called the 'Inclosure Acts'. These 'legal' enclosures consolidated strips in the open fields into more

compact units and enclosed much of the remaining pasture common land. True, these enclosures usually provided commoners with some other land in compensation for the loss of common rights, but it was often of poor quality and limited extent.

Enclosure was an important factor in the reduction of the number of small landholders ('smallholders') in England, as compared to the Continent. This encouraged emigration. Furthermore, it faced a great deal of popular resistance because of its effects on the household economies of smallholders and landless labourers. Common rights had included not just the right of cattle or sheep grazing, but also the grazing of geese, foraging for pigs, gleaning, berry picking and fuel gathering. By the end of the 19th century the process of enclosure was largely complete, in most areas just leaving a few pasture commons and village greens, the last surviving fragments of the common land of free England.

Conclusion

Many landowners became rich through the enclosure of the commons, while many ordinary folk had a centuries-old right taken away. Land enclosure has been condemned as a gigantic


swindle on the part of large landowners. As early as 1770 the poet Oliver Goldsmith had written his *The Deserted Village*, deploring rural depopulation. An anonymous protest poem from the 17th century summed up the anti-enclosure feeling:

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common,
But lets the greater felon loose
Who steals the common from off the goose.

There is no doubt, if we return to our original question, that it was the enclosures, common land privatisation, which led to the elimination of the English peasantry and its customs and beliefs. It was through this process of theft that the word 'peasant' became a term of abuse and insult. With the privatisation of common land, a whole community and culture which had long supported the Christian Faith, was lost. Surely, it is the early period and the brutality of this elimination of the peasantry, unlike in other European countries, which lies behind the adulteration of today's under-nourishing food and the many contemporary scandals attached to its processing, not to mention the general spiritual impoverishment of English life today.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



 This year some Anglican churches are celebrating their Great Thursday 2013 with a Passover meal followed directly by Communion. There will be an imitation of the Jewish Passover, since 'Jesus celebrated the first Eucharist at the Passover meal'. But surely we Orthodox, who use leavened bread, do not think an imitation of a Jewish Passover meal is any longer of any relevance. In fact, contrary to the West we celebrate Easter after the Jewish Passover is over. Protestants say there is a discrepancy between the Synoptic Gospels and St John regarding the date of Easter. Can you help?

J. H., The Cotswolds

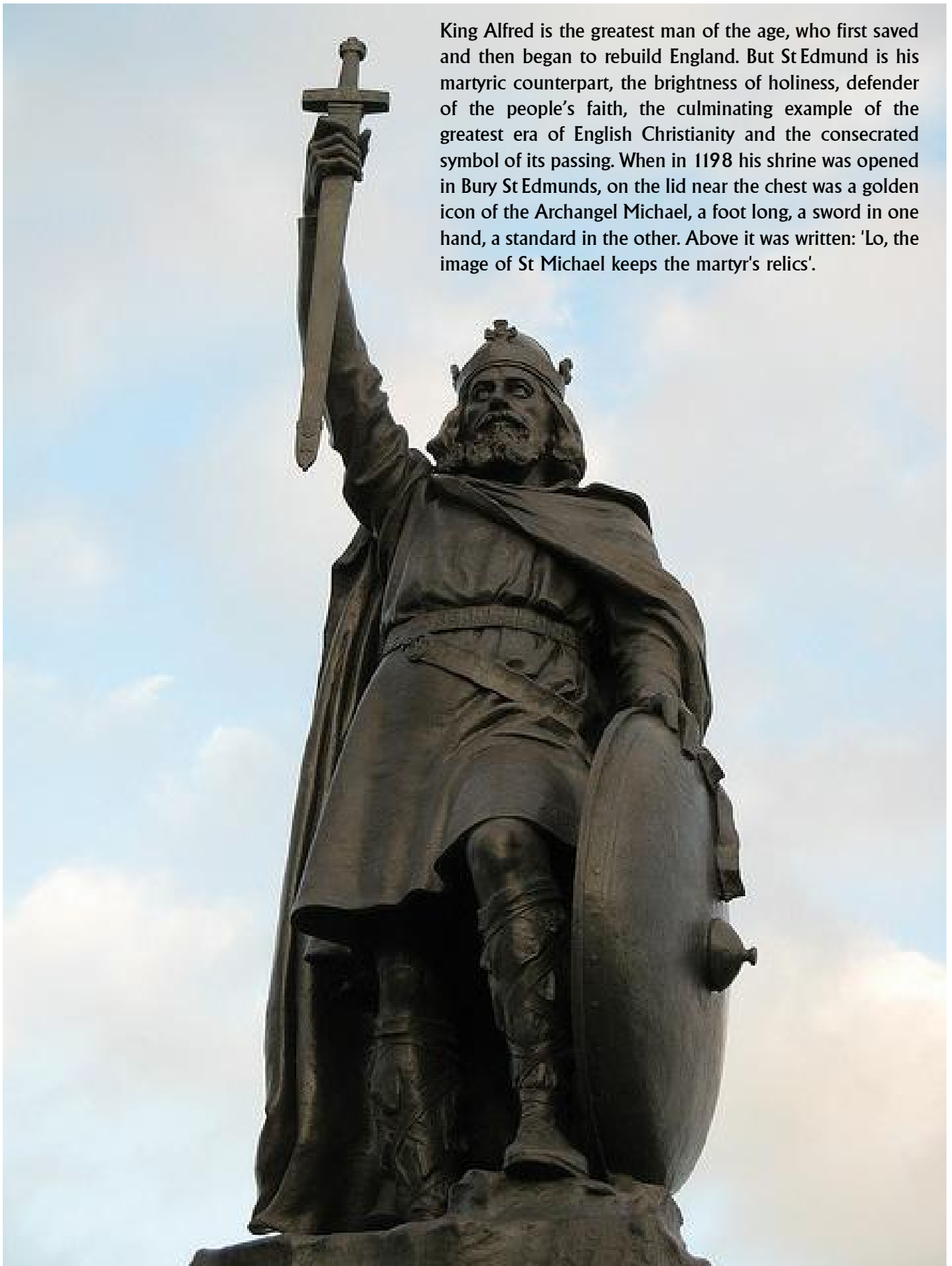
This is another case of Protestants (and make no mistake, Anglicans are Protestants) rejecting the Church and reverting to Old Testament Judaism.

(The Jews financed Cromwell and Protestant Bibles begin with the Old Testament, which they are obsessed with). This year's Passover lasts from 25 March to 2 April, so once more Non-Orthodox are un-canonically concelebrating with the Jews.

I know of no discrepancy in the Gospels, except those imagined by Protestants. All the Gospels make it clear that the Passover that year fell on the Sabbath, Saturday ('a high day that year'). Christ's meal took place a day early, on Thursday evening – it could not take place on Friday evening because Christ knew he would have been crucified by then and would be preaching to Jews and Gentiles alike in hades.

Since Christ is the New Passover, we Christians will have nothing to do with this Anglican-Jewish ('Judeo-Christian') affair.

King Alfred is the greatest man of the age, who first saved and then began to rebuild England. But St Edmund is his martyric counterpart, the brightness of holiness, defender of the people's faith, the culminating example of the greatest era of English Christianity and the consecrated symbol of its passing. When in 1198 his shrine was opened in Bury St Edmunds, on the lid near the chest was a golden icon of the Archangel Michael, a foot long, a sword in one hand, a standard in the other. Above it was written: 'Lo, the image of St Michael keeps the martyr's relics'.



ALFRED AND EDMUND

