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of the Baptism of Rus'



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EDITOR'S LETTER

FAITH AS HOPE

*The Christianisation of Rus', which took place 1035 years ago,
introduced it into a new, global world*

By KIRILL PRIVALOV



That meeting took place almost four decades ago, but I remember everything as if it were now.

“Good Lord, how it smells! How divine it smells!” Vera Lvovna held touchingly and carefully, like a baby or a precious pearl, a rye bread loaf brought to her from Moscow as a gift. An emigrant of the first, “white” generation of Russian refugees who settled near Paris, she could not fully enjoy the unique bitter and caramel aroma of Borodino bread.

The old woman (really, what a rude phrase!) pressed her lips to a rudely, spicy rye loaf and, breaking off the crust, kissed it:

“I can hear Rus', Holy Rus'!”

It is with this epithet that we often talk about Russia. This is not a figure of speech, but the essence of the primordial perception of the vast space inherited from our ancestors, and I emphasise that: only perception, without inner *modus vivendi*. And the lofty term “holiness” itself, as

a general synonym for the purity of the spirit, soul and body and non-involvement in evil, is not the main thing here. For we are talking about holiness not in the sense of a state of being or our lifestyle, but about Christian, more precisely, Orthodox holiness. On the holiness of the Russian Faith.

“Modern history is the history of Christianity”, said Alexander Pushkin. He spoke primarily about culture, and Russian culture is Christian for the most part. I recall our long-standing conversation with Vasily Aksyonov back in Biarritz, France, before the writer returned from exile to Moscow. I asked Vasily Pavlovich in his cozy little house with the Basque name *Arbola derra*, why his American lectures were largely devoted to the Silver Age. Aksyonov replied: “The Silver Age was the apogee of Russian culture. The very one without which Russia would not have become one of the greatest political and economic powers in the world at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The power of a country is measured by the potential of its creators. Not only scientists, inventors, rationalisers, but also, and first of all, intellectuals: writers, philosophers, composers ... The deep culture of Russia is based on Christology. The Christianisation of the country became, in fact, the starting point of its observable history and introduced it into a new, global world.”

Frankly, I was surprised that this came from the man who was born in the USSR and was formed by Soviet society. No one would ever call a wonderful writer, as they say

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Monument to the Baptist of Rus', Prince
Vladimir Svyatoslavich in Moscow.
Photo: RIA News



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Grand Prince Vladimir chooses a faith by Ivan Eggink. 1822

now, “churched.” No, the author of *The Island of Crimea and Overstocked Packaging Barrels* was a worthy representative of a completely secular era. And so the more valuable is the wisdom of Aksyonov, an outstanding thinker and patriot. For the year 988, when Rus’ was baptised officially (some researchers believe that it happened later, in 990 or even in 991), was the starting point for everything that we see around us today – it was the beginning of great beginnings.

When did Christianity come to the modern Russian territory? It is an ungrateful mission to answer this question, because with the development of science, new discoveries determine the first Christian churches in the country as being closer

and closer to the Nativity of Christ in terms of the date of their establishment.

In Dagestani Derbent, the southernmost city of Russia, they discovered an underground structure, about the purpose of which the researchers put forward several versions at once. Experts considered that it could be both a huge water reservoir and an ancient temple of fire-worshipping Zoroastrians ... All doubts disappeared when they obtained the results of muon radiography. It is made to detect muons passing through the walls; muons are charged particles arising from the interaction of primary cosmic rays with the nuclei in the Earth’s atmosphere. The experiment showed that the building was cross-shaped,

and its walls were oriented to the cardinal points. The dome is located in the center of the cruciform structure. There is no doubt: the underground structure rather was a large Christian church of the time. And, as radiography shows, it was built around the year 300.

Yes, Christians lived on the territory of the Eastern Slavs and their neighbours as early as the Roman emperors. There is a legend about St. Andrew the First-Called, who went to carry Christ faith to Scythia – first to the Northern Black Sea region and then up the Dnieper. Allegedly, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus erected a cross on the hills on which Kiev later grew. These events described in the manner of Hollywood alternative history

raise doubts even among the most zealous hagiographers ... However, behind every myth there are, as you know, real facts which had been forgotten long ago.

Byzantium, fearing to have numerous tribes of warlike pagan barbarians near its borders, systematically sent missionaries to them. You will not envy the fate of some of them, including those who tried their luck at the time of the Roman Empire. The life of Clement, the fourth Pope of Rome, tells of the stay of this pontiff in hard labour in the Inkerman quarries near Chersonesus, where Clement died during the reign of Emperor Trajan, that is, at the turn of the first and second centuries after the Nativity of Christ. The pagan Romans tied Clement by the neck to an anchor and threw him into the Black Sea ...

Despite this, Christianity in the Crimea became such popular already in the 3rd century, that there was a need for their own bishop. At the historic First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, Metropolitan Gotfil was present, who coordinated – pay attention! – the Taurida Episcopacy already established by the time. Representatives of the Bosphorus (Kerch) and Chersonesus also put their signatures under the council resolutions.

However, in no case should one assume that the Eastern Slavs easily abandoned their pagan gods: Perun, Veles, Dazhbog ... But the Byzantine missionaries were on the alert: sometimes they managed to convert Slavic nobles, commanders and even princes to Christianity. Where are specific evidences? They don’t really exist today ... But there is a legend about the conversion of Askold and Dir, the boyars-retinues of the Novgorod prince Rurik, to Christianity around the year 860. But it is not clear who these characters were, who allegedly ruled in Kiev.

However, in some sources, some church historians connect the so-called Christianisation of Rus’ by Photius with the era when Emperor Photius sent his bishop to the banks of the Dnieper. They call it the first, so to speak, pre-Vladimir Christianisation dotted in later annals. But was it real? As Italians say, “*Se non è vero, è ben trovato*” (“Even if it is not true, it is a very good fabrication”).

The first real rulers of Rus’, Oleg and Igor, were pagans. But the wife of Prince Igor, Princess Olga, became a Christian – this is an undoubted fact. One can argue that her spiritual choice was caused by political necessity and nothing more. But this is all *ad marginem* (“in the margins of the page”). It is much more important that the Slavic-Varangian Olga was baptised in 955 (according to Byzantine sources – in 957), and where – directly in Constantinople, the stay in which of the Russian princess was described in medieval official documents literally step by step.

It is characteristic that this visit of the ruler of the Rus, which lasted for more than a month on the banks of the Bosphorus, took place after the victorious campaigns of the Kievan princes against Byzantium in 866, 907 and 941. Context is important. For these were not pirate raids in the manner of Scandinavian Viking robbers; all the campaigns of the Rus resulted in official agreements with Constantinople. So, Olga hoped to extract the maximum benefit from her trip to Tsargrad, not for herself personally, but for Rus’. Basil Constantine Porphyrogenitus did everything to impress the distinguished guest from the “wild lands” as much as possible. There was a “flying” throne of the emperor, and roaring mechanical lions beating their tails, and golden trees with singing birds of paradise ...

However, Byzantine cunning tricks could not change Olga’s intentions.

She came to Tsargrad to receive the sacrament of baptism aiming at not becoming the spiritual imperial “August wife”, but obtaining the high title of “daughter queen.” But Constantine Porphyrogenitus refused to place the royal crown on the forehead of their princess. Basil could not allow the ruler of Rus’ to be equated with himself, like God. He understood that the future Russian Church might further seek for its independence from Constantinople.

Olga faced an impossible challenge: to reunite the Russian Church with the Byzantine priesthood and at the same time prevent her country from becoming a political satellite and a cultural province of the Byzantine Empire. Looking down from his heavenly palace on the peoples neighbouring with his empire, Basil considered for them the fate of the Byzantine satellites, its protectorates. This is what happened to the Bulgarians, Hungarians, with the Lombards in Italy ... The Kievan princess imagined the future of Rus’ in a different way.

The “Russian Archontissa” (as the Greeks called the princess) was baptised at Hagia Sophia, but did not want to obey those who saw themselves as “rulers of Europe and Asia.” Olga saw tomorrow’s Rus’ as a Christian country, but at the same time not at all implicitly dependent from the theocracy of Byzantium. Her arrogance turned young Svyatoslav from accepting Christ faith, while he visited Tsargrad together with his mother and was not even invited by the emperor to a farewell dinner organised for the intractable Rus. And the Rus, being humiliated, did not want to forget the offense. When Basil’s emissaries a few years later came to Kiev for support and asked for “warriors to help”, as stated in *The Tale of Bygone Years*, Olga refused to send her experienced fighters to save Constantinople once again from the Arabs.



Baptism of Rus' by Viktor Vasnetsov. Between 1885–1896

Watching the endless intrigues of the “flabby, pampered Romans”, Svyatoslav remained a pagan, who, moreover, was denied the hand of a Byzantine Caesarean. Through the fault of swaggering Byzantium, the baptism of Rus’ was, in fact, delayed for three decades, until the coming to power of Svyatoslav’s son, Vladimir.

... Vladimir Svyatoslavovich has many synonyms in the Russian chronicles. He is called “blessed”, and “equal to the apostles”, and “great” ... In a word: Beautiful Sun. And the Rurik dynasty is erected right up to the Roman emperor Augustus.

As the ancients used to say: “Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s!” Let us leave such historiographic exercises to specialists. But I am keenly interested in something completely different: why did Vladimir follow the precepts of his mighty grandmother, and what did his spiritual choice give first to multi-tribal Rus’ and then to all of multi-national Russia?

The route “from the Varangians to the Greeks” remained one of the main trade and transport arteries of Europe until the 12th century. In the northern part of this

route stood the largest city of Rus’, Novgorod, accessible to the cold seas, being rich and freedom-loving. The neighbouring Chud tribes – Finns, Estonians, Vepsians, Karelians – themselves participated in Slavic trade. Chud’s courtyards, guest houses for Finno-Ugric merchants existed both in Kiev and Novgorod. But closer to the south, where they had to drag ships on logs, it was necessary for all merchants from different tribes to unite their forces. Steppe nomads and villains of all stripes were just waiting for caravans with commodities to be within reach of them on land. The same faith for all, merchants and their guards, helped to better understand each other. Both in battle and in commerce. It only remained for the prince to choose the faith that suited him, as well as the whole of Rus’.

The compiler of *The Tale of Bygone Years*, a monk of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra named Nestor, presents Vladimir as a “tester of faith.” Quite recently being an outspoken pagan, according to some sources, he even practiced human sacrifice, and he experienced a comedown from his father’s beliefs and was looking for a new religion for his people. In the annals, the moment of the choice by the ruler of Kiev among the Islam of the Volga Bulgars, the Judaism of the “rebellious Khazars” and the Christianity of the Greeks appears, in my opinion, superficially and unconvincingly.

More importantly, paganism does not look like a religion. Actually, it was not. It was a chaotic collection of various beliefs and cults. It included parochial national features, but there was no ability to unite scattered and warring tribes. And prudently ambitious Vladimir, who came with a sword from Novgorod to Kiev, having become a Grand Duke, passionately longs to unite



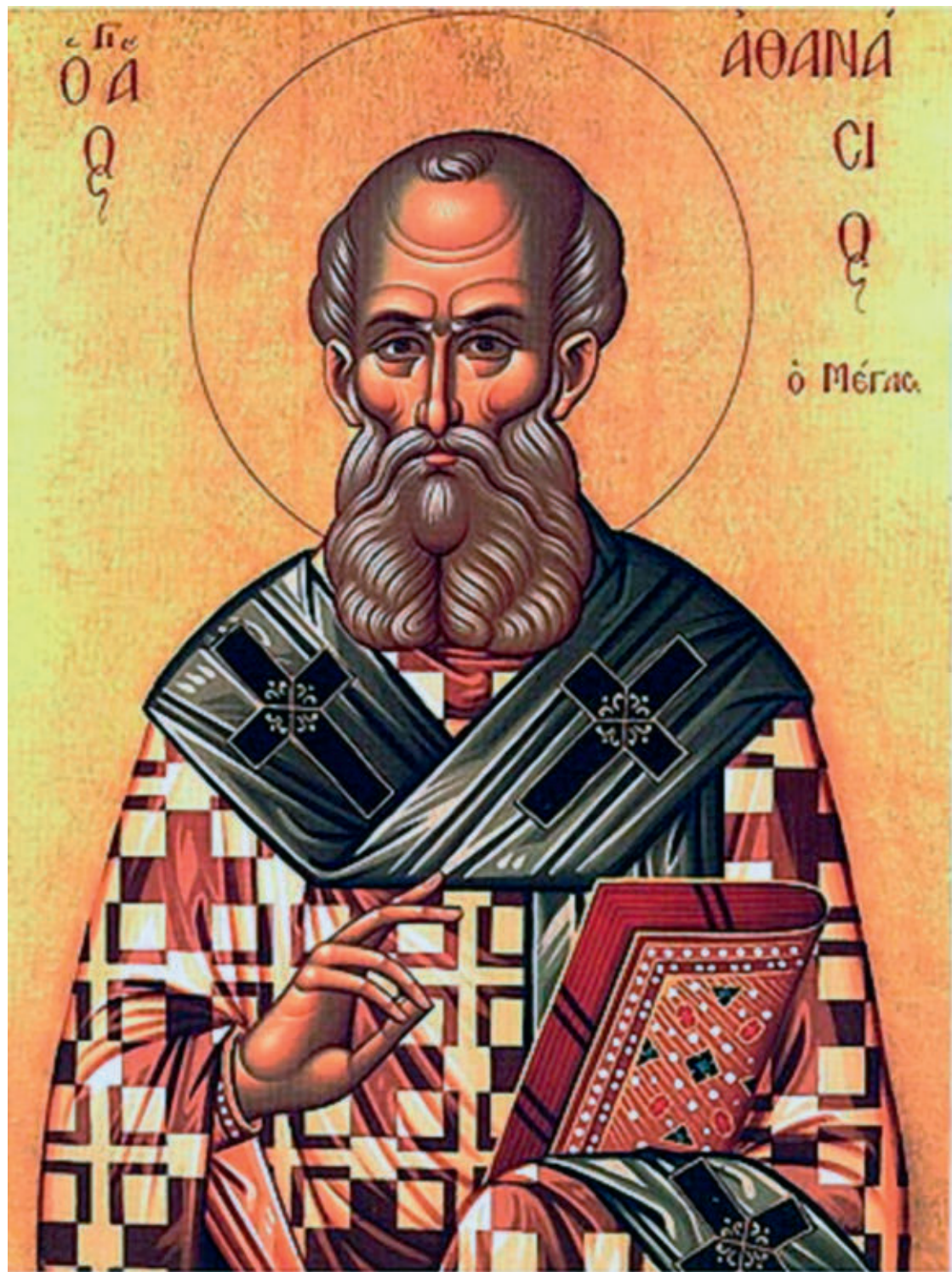
The True Cross. Saint Equal-to-the-Apostles Cyril and Methodius

Rus’ with minimal losses. This call of his to the unity of all the peoples that make up the country, echoed throughout Russian history. It still sounds to this day.

The future nation was maturing from two sides: in Novgorod, open to the north and west, and Kiev facing the south. It was enough for Rus’ to stew in its own juice, it was vital for it to break out into the open board from its native forests and swamps. It required a vivid sense of time as a measure of history and a cultural factor – from Greek antiquity up to the New Rome of the Romans.

Vladimir, a brave warrior (not always lucky, I must say), a smart diplomat and an energetic creator, simply loved life itself in all its guises – more than power or women. And to increase the enjoyment of life, the prince wished to perceive the numerous neighbours of Rus’ not as “Germans” (originating from the word “dumb”, that is, not speaking an understandable language), potential enemies, but as, if not partners, then at least co-religionists. It was more reasonable to join a globally established, strong and actively spreading religion by agreement than to compete with it forcedly.

The rise of Kiev over the seemingly much more powerful Novgorod was largely due to the fact that Christianity came to Rus’ precisely from the south, from Tsargrad. Why not a convincing argument against the version of the Varangians as the shapers of our country, appearing in the Romanov era under the influence of Germanic families, which made up the Russian noble synod to a large extent? In fact, most likely, everything was exactly the opposite. For reference: the baptism of Scandinavia – Sweden and Norway – took place two centuries later than of Rus’. And this happened not



Athanasius of Alexandria: "God became man so that man might become God"

without the influence of our ancestors, the Slavs-Varyags.

If Frank Charlemagne brings Christianity to Germany, beating up entire

Saxonic tribes, Jesus faith is spreading quite peacefully in Rus'. The overthrow of Perun was not accompanied by mass repressions. With tears,

the pagans lowered dilapidated wooden idols down the rivers, but they usually did not take up weapons. The only exception was Novgorod, where the captain of the thousand Ugonai rushed along the city wall shouting: "It is better to die than to give our gods a mockery." And "the evil slaughter began", as the Ipatiev Chronicle says.

But the forces were unequal. The prince's warriors quickly overcame the townspeople. Warriors have long sympathised with the "Byzantine faith": "One God in heaven – one basil on earth!" And the Novgorod boyars, as practical businessmen, quickly realising with whom it would be more profitable for them

to be, were baptised in unison. Vladimir, who at the time of his paganism was distinguished by cruelty, this time took pity on the disobedient. To the question

of his comrades-in-arms from the inner circle, why he did not execute the rebels, he answered in a completely Christian way: "I am afraid of sin ..."

Constantine the Great was baptised only on the verge of death, frightened by the piercing cold of non-existence. Vladimir went the other way: he has been changing throughout his life. He knew that, as not being pure in his soul, he had no right to purify others in a Christian way. He left the baptismal font as a new man and gave hope for renewal to his compatriots. As Scripture says, "For we are saved in hope." Is this not true power?.. It also helped that, while peacefully entering the life traditions in Rus', Christianity did not conflict with pagan rites, but simply absorbed them, adapted them to its own purpose. So, the Sun God day of the summer solstice turned into the feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist, and Triglav into the feast of the Holy Trinity, and the Slavs celebrated Maslenitsa and Easter under other names long before the adoption of Christianity. It did not turn into a dogma in Rus', but gave people the ability to see a miracle in the dullness of everyday life, allowed them to gain hope for a better life. Even if a better life means afterlife!

Absolute values for Rus' were formed only thanks to the commandments of Christ. With Jesus faith, the stereotypes of the primitive consciousness of the Rus were torn from top to bottom like the veil in the Temple at Jerusalem on the day of the Crucifixion. The world became extensional and boundless for the Rus. Another important historic event contributed to this too: the development of Slavic writing by Cyril and Methodius. The alphabet was born! Is it coincidence? Of course, not. Changes in Rus' have been brewing for a long time, and now they had come. Rapidly, all at once. The feat of the Prelate Vladimir coincided with the gift to the Slavic

world of the two great Thessalonica brothers (Solun is the Slavic name of Thessaloniki).

Athanasius of Alexandria, one of the great defenders of early Christianity, said: "God became man so that man might become God." This is about Rus', about Russia. Its conciliar nature is a unique phenomenon. In Russian Christianity, the individual is not suppressed, but devoid of egoism. It exists in the free spiritual unity of people, both in church life and in the secular community. For the mentality of the Russian people was born in the symbiosis of the Orthodox Church and the village community. In other languages, there is no analogue to the word "conciliarity", because the phenomenon itself does not exist. As the remarkable Russian philosopher and theologian Vladimir Solovyov accurately formulated, "Catholicism is unity without freedom; Protestantism is freedom without unity; Orthodoxy is unity in freedom and freedom in unity."

Christianity (Orthodoxy since 1054) and the Cyrillic alphabet are the two keys to access of our ancestors to the big world stage. And who owns the language, those control their people. "Our faith is not Greek, but Christian", said Ivan the Terrible. And it must be admitted that even the reforms of Peter the Great, pro-Western in spirit, changed neither the essence of the Russian faith nor the Russian alphabet. However, is it really Russian? According to some reports, Vladimir was persuaded to be baptised by his Bulgarian wife (before baptism, the pagan Grand Duke had several hundred wives and concubines). She also suggested borrowing a cult language from the Bulgarians. On that basis, Russian national identity had formed. With the help of the systematised Bulgarian written language, the Russian path to great literature was shortened. At first, only to spiritual literature. In the very first century of Russian Christianity, such

masterpieces as, say, Metropolitan Hilarion's *The Sermon on Law and Grace* appeared. He presents Vladimir's conversion to the true faith as a miracle. The Metropolitan of Kiev writes about Vladimir in the middle of the 11th century, that he did not see Christ, did not know either the law or the prophets, did not hear the apostolic sermon, did not see the miracles performed by the saints, but "without all these forerunners to Christ, only due to the good sense and smartness, he understood that there is only one God, the creator invisible and visible."

While the character of a person is their destiny, then the character of a nation is the same. Christianity, with its cult of self-sacrifice, was sincerely, even sometimes frenetically, received by the Russians. Another thing is, whether such, often martyrdom, selflessness was always helpful and salutary for them? In any case, without Christianity brought by St. Vladimir (it is curious that he was canonised only almost three centuries after his death, but this is a separate issue) there would be neither Russia nor the Russian idea. Without this, Russia cannot be understood, just as, for example, China cannot be understood without Confucianism.

Conciliarity is the constant of the Russian national consciousness. The communists tried to spoil it with their demonstrative "common idea and common will." But the Bolsheviks succeeded only temporarily, only partially. Their Marxist faith proved itself as too destructive to give the masses any convincing hope for long. To a large extent, Western individualism, with its material well-being and gender indistinctness as the only synonyms for happiness, had a stab at Christian conciliarity at the recent turn of the millennia. It neither happened, as we see today.

But we as Russian people still have Faith. And still have Hope. This is also a forever covenant of the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir.

SUMMERTIME HOLINESS

*The memory of Saint Olga is celebrated at the end of July
and at the end of August the Church remembers Saint Monica*

By AUGUSTINE SOKOLOVSKI,
Doctor of Theology, priest



Vasily Sazonov. "The first meeting of Prince Igor with Olga". 1824

Saints Olga and Monica, whose memory adorns the church calendar of summertime, are an amazing example of female and maternal righteousness.

SAINT OLGA

On July 24, the Church celebrates the memory of St. Olga. One of the greatest Russian saints, Olga

is revered as the first of the Russian rulers to receive holy baptism. Celebrating the memory of Saint Olga, the Church thanks God for her personal conversion, as well as for the beneficial influence she had on her grandson, Prince Vladimir (956–1015).

The church calls Olga "equal to the apostles." The history of the origin of such a term in relation to the saints is symbolic and

curious at the same time. The fact is that Emperor Constantine the Great I (+337) was baptized before his death and bequeathed to bury himself in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, which he himself built.

It is important to understand that the signing of the Edict of Milan in 313, the holding of the Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325, which united the episcopate of the Christian

Church to resolve doctrinal issues, and then the baptism by the Emperor became the stages of an event of truly revolutionary importance. Before the accession of Constantine to the throne, Christians in the Empire were a minority. At the end of his reign, Christianity actually became the official confession of faith. Moreover, the very term Orthodoxy began to denote the interpretation of Christian teaching accepted in the Roman Empire.

The Emperor was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles. So, symbolically, he rested next to them, became "one of them." This marked the beginning of the naming of Constantine himself Equal to the Apostles.

Indeed, his services to the Church and Christianity were very great. Therefore, over time, the title of Constantine Equal to the Apostles became an expression of gratitude of the Church, as the People of God, for his work.

Thus, the origin of the term Equal-to-the-Apostles was originally "political". Over time, this title began to be called the great missionaries. So, the theological meaning was added to the political meaning of the term.

So, by analogy with Constantine, the Church calls "equal to the apostles" those rulers who have become enlighteners and baptizers for their countries. In addition, subsequently, holy missionaries began to be called Equal-to-the-Apostles. These were those preachers, evangelists, spreaders of the faith of Christ, who later began to be revered by the people of God as saints.

At the same time, the name "equal to the apostles" in relation to one or another saint is not necessarily synonymous with the success of their work. Thus, in the case of Cyril (827–869) and Methodius (815–885), whom the Church also calls Equal-to-the-Apostles, the historical mission of the Slavic enlightenment of Moravia came to naught

during their lifetime. The mission of the Orthodox missionary in Japan, close to us in time, Nikolai Kasatkin (1836–1912), according to statistics, was less successful than the corresponding mission of Protestants and Catholics over the same years. It is important to understand that statistics cannot measure apostolate.

But back to Saint Olga. According to the chronicles, she came from the outskirts of Pskov. She was born there around 890. Already in 903, she became the wife of Igor (878–945), who, according to the chronicles, was destined to ascend the throne in 912. Such an early marriage in those days from the point of view of law was not a rare occurrence. So according to medieval church rules, marriage was allowed very early. Apparently, the marriage of Igor and Olga was stable and successful, but in 945 the prince was killed. Olga became the de facto ruler of Rus' due to the infancy of her son Sviatoslav (942–972).

At the same time, neither Igor nor Olga were Christians. Although exact information about this has not been preserved, due to their origin, they most likely shared the pagan ideas of the Varangians and Slavs. Olga may have been a Slavic; her husband was from the Varangian tribe. At the same time, her very name, which comes from the Germanic word for "holy" or "sacred", speaks in favor of her Scandinavian origin. Apparently, in the "original language" it sounded like Helga.

The most important act of Olga on the princely throne was baptism in 955. According to the chroniclers, Olga was baptized by the Patriarch, and the Emperor himself was the godfather.

Later enlightened historians questioned this version, seeing in it a kind of naive ambition of a very young people, which was then Rus'. It is possible that Olga was baptized in much more modest circumstances, in private in her homeland.

But it seems that the chronicles do not lie. After all, the name that Olga received in baptism – she was called 'Elena' – was no doubt a project name. After all, Olga had a son, Sviatoslav, who, if we continue this logic of the name, by analogy with the Equal-to-the-Apostles Constantine and Elena, was to become Constantine.

That first, ancient, Roman, Saint Helena was the mother of the Emperor. In 330, it was he, Constantine, who founded New Rome on the banks of the Bosphorus – the City, which was soon to be named after him.

Constantine also built the church of Hagia Sophia. In it, destroyed and immediately rebuilt in the 6th century by the Great Justinian, Olga was baptized. So, according to the chronicle, the princess was baptized by Patriarch Theophylact (933–956), Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (945–959) acted as a godparent. After this event, he had only four years left to live. About the same number of years Olga had to rule. In 961 Sviatoslav ascended the throne and ruled until his tragic death in 972.

In 1453, Constantinople, which by that time had become a city-state, fell under the blows of the Ottomans. Hagia Sophia, whose name, based on the semantics of ancient terminology, should be understood as the "Temple of Christ the Savior" became the military trophy of Sultan Mehmet (1432–1481). The conqueror entered the Cathedral on a horse, and soon turned the temple into a mosque.

By an amazing coincidence, the liturgical service in honor of the saint, was written by the Serbian and Russian theologian and author of liturgical texts and the lives of the saints Pachomius the Serb (+1484) in 1453. It was in this year, on May 30, that the fall of Constantinople took place.



Vladimir Svyatoslavich at the Millennium of Russia Monument in Veliky Novgorod

History made Hagia Sophia a museum in 1935 before being reversed today. In 2020, Sofia again became a mosque, and the second transformation took place on July 24 – exactly on the day when our Church celebrates the memory of Equal-to-the-Apostles Olga. The lives of the saints, like postmodern literature, are often rich in play of coincidences. Such coincidences keep a warning.

The Byzantine project ‘Olga – Helena – Konstantine’ failed. According to the testimony of the same chroniclers, her son Sviatoslav (942–972) refused to accept Christianity. At the same time, unlike so many rulers of that time, who, like so many today, wanted to turn the rivers of time back, he did not hate Christianity at all. According to the chronicle, it seemed to him unworthy of the calling of a commander. From 961 he became the ruler of Rus’. So, it became obvious that Olga did not manage to baptize her country, or maybe she simply did not have time.

The story doesn’t stop though. The answer from above to the Constantinople project “Baptism of Rus” was not long in coming. Already in 970, that is, only five years after Olga’s baptism, Sviatoslav almost took Constantinople himself. The army of the prince stood under its walls.



Saint Augustine by Philippe de Champaigne. Between circa 1645 and circa 1650

The Patriarch in Hagia Sophia prayed God to deliver the believers.

What happened was an indication that true politics is the highest form of love for one’s neighbor. And real, genuine Christianity will always be... the faith of the absurd, and the ridiculous, and the weak. “Blessed are the meek,” as Jesus said in the Gospel (Matthew 5:5).

But Olga knew how to wait. She surprisingly had the wisdom not to baptize Rus’, taking advantage of her son’s infancy. She made no plans. Didn’t build great churches. Olga was granted by Christ the Grace of Expectation. The ability to wait and mourn is an amazing ability that unites man and God in Scripture.

It so happened that this, perhaps the most unsuccessful – in terms of the success of a personal mission – “Saint Equal to the Apostles” in history, in fact, built something that hardly any of the others succeeded. Olga did not create a great local Church and did not build many temples. But by her very expectation, she built a stairway to heaven. It was the same staircase, along which, in 988, Vladimir, the Baptist of Rus’, whom his contemporaries would call the Red Sun, soon ascended.

Eight years after the Baptism of Rus’, in 996, Prince Vladimir transferred the relics of St. Olga to the Church that she once built. The ancient Church, and such was the Russian Church in the first period of its history, did not know the formal regular canonizations of saints. Therefore, in accordance with another ancient tradition of the Church, which called the days of the death of the martyrs and the righteous “birthdays”, the day of remembrance of the revered saint relied on the day of his departure to God. Thus, the celebration in honor of Olga was established on the day of her death on July 11 according to the Julian calendar. Recall that according to the modern secular calendar, this day corresponds to July 24. Olga passed away to the Lord in 969.

Often, St. Olga is mistakenly perceived as a successful statesman. She is presented as a kind of prince Vladimir before prince Vladimir, the preliminary baptizer of Rus’ before the baptism in 988, final, solemn, and decisive. But Olga’s Constantinople project failed. It is important not to forget about this.

However, if what the chroniclers tell about Vladimir before his baptism corresponds to historical reality, then Olga, undoubtedly, should have mourned that her son refused to share her convictions. Her grandson grew up as a pagan and developed in the opposite direction to Christianity, the habit of sin, according

to the chronicles, became rooted in him. So, in this grief, Olga became like many grieving holy mothers. Among them was the mother of St. Augustine Monica.

SAINT MONICA

On August 28, the Church celebrates the memory of St. Augustine. The Russian philosophical tradition calls him Blessed Augustine. Because in our modern Orthodox terminology it is customary to call “blessed” saints who voluntarily or due to character traits have refused to realize their intellectual abilities, the use of this term in relation to Augustine should be avoided. Augustine was one of the greatest Church Fathers, philosopher, and theologian.

At the end of August 430 he passed away to the Lord in the city of Hippo Regius, besieged by the Vandal tribes. In this modern Algerian city called Annaba, Augustine was the bishop of the Christian Church for more than thirty years.

According to tradition, on the eve of Augustine’s Memorial Day, August 27, the Church remembers his mother, Saint Monica.

Like Emilia of Caesarea (+375), Nonna of Nazianzus (+374) and Anthusa of Antioch (324-?) – the mothers of Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom – Monica was one of those great wives who brought up great teachers of universal Christianity. Without them, the history of the Church and the world would have been different. The holy mothers of the Church Fathers are truly worthy of veneration.

The mother of the greatest of the western Fathers of the Church was born in Thagaste, modern Algerian Souq-Ahras, in 331. At the age of 22, she gave birth to Augustine, being 40 years old, she was widowed in 371.

Monica’s husband, Patricius, or, in modern transcription, Patrick,

was baptized before his death. Such a tradition, in fact, turning sacramental baptism for the remission of sins into a washing before death, was widespread in antiquity. Paradoxically, it was the future teaching of the late Augustine that contributed to the abolition of this practice.

The death of the father did not change the attitude of the future Father of the Church towards Christianity. He was in religious delusions, and, like the Apostle Paul before his conversion, but intellectually, he persecuted the Church (1 Cor.15:9), denying the meaningfulness of Christianity and mocking the biblical Old Testament foundations of faith in Jesus Christ. Saint Monica prayed for her son, her prayer then was based on the conviction of the Christians of the Carthaginian Church that God, by the power of grace, can change the will of a person, break it by transforming it into a Thirst for Good (cf. Luke 14:23). Faith, prayer, and patience of St. Monica did not remain without fruit.

In 387, on the night of Easter, April 24, Augustine was baptized in Milan by Saint Ambrose. A few months later, on November 13, Monica reposed in the Lord in Roman Ostia.

In addition to her first child, Augustine, Monica gave birth to a son, Navigius, and a daughter, Perpetua (+423). The latter is also canonized in the saints.

Augustine’s conversion to Christianity was the result of a personal search and the most complex spiritual evolution. However, he himself believed and claimed that he became a Christian through the predestination of God and the prayers of his mother. In his later writings, Augustine insisted that he received knowledge of this from above by divine revelation at the moment of episcopal ordination.

In addition to Monica’s Memorial Day on August 27, the Orthodox Church celebrates the memory

of the saint on May 17, as well as on June 14 (27), on the eve of another Augustine memorial day in some Orthodox Churches. Let us recall that on June 28 our Church honors the memory of the Father of the Church jointly with another great representative of the ancient Western Orthodox tradition, the translator of the Bible into Latin, Jerome (347 – 420).

Interestingly, the May celebration in honor of the mother of saint Augustine is associated with the transfer of part of the relics of Monica from Rome to the Augustinian abbey of Arrouaise in northern France in 1162.

Founded in 1090, the monastery in the name of St. Nicholas needed the special heavenly intercession of Augustine, whose monastic charter he was guided by. Obviously, the veneration of the Father of the Church himself in those days was very great. Augustine was called the “Matrix of all conclusions” and the “Father of Fathers.” His relics rested in the northern Italian city of Pavia. Therefore, bringing any ancient relic directly related to him was simply not possible.

On the contrary, the veneration of Augustine’s mother Monica began to spread in the Church only seven centuries after her righteous death. At the turn of the first and second millennia of the Christian era, it greatly increased and continued to spread unspeakably until our time. It turns out that



Saint Monica by Piero della Francesca. Between circa 1455 and circa 1460

the transfer of relics to France and the beginning of the flowering of her veneration in that era are mutually intertwined.

Like many shrines, churches, and monasteries, the once very glorious Abbey of the canons of St. Augustine ceased to exist during the French

Revolution (1789). But connected with the circumstances of the heyday of the monastery, the transfer of the relics of the saint by the mysterious predestination of God became one of the dates for the celebration of the memory of Monica of Thagaste in Orthodoxy.

ANDREI RUBLEV'S TRINITY ICON RETURNS TO THE CHURCH

On June 4, 2023, the icon of the Holy Trinity, painted by St Andrei Rublev, was brought to the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour

By EKATERINA LUGOVAYA

Speaking at the meeting of the Holy Synod on May 16, 2023, Patriarch Kirill spoke about how the decision had been made to transfer the icon to the Church.

The Primate of the Russian Church said that he had sent a letter to the head of the Presidential Administration, which, in particular, read: 'As you know, the icon of the Holy Trinity, painted in the fifteenth century by the Venerable Andrei Rublev, is kept at the State Tretyakov Gallery. Till 1917 the icon belonged to the Holy Trinity-St Sergius Lavra and was situated in the iconostasis of the Holy Trinity Cathedral. This year the feast of the Holy Trinity falls on June 4. Taking into account the special historical and cultural value of this icon, I deem it proper this year to organise its transfer for the feast of the Holy Trinity from the Tretyakov Gallery to the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow with the icon staying in this church for two weeks in order to provide access to it to a large number of believers. The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation has no objections to moving the icon of the Holy Trinity to the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour for the specified period.'

According to Patriarch Kirill, in response to this appeal 'the President of the Russian Federation made a historic decision to return the icon of the Holy Trinity to the Russian Orthodox Church.' The Primate added that 'we could only dream that this relic

would be returned to the Church so that our people could pray in front of it, asking for God's blessing on both the country and the Church..'

Most researchers consider the date of Andrei Rublev's birth to be about 1360, but it is conditional. The 'Description of the Russian Saints' reads that the venerable man died in 1430 'at a ripe old age.' Considering that the 'ripe old age' came at seventy, the researchers got to 1360 by mathematical calculation. There is also an opinion that Rublev was born in the 1370s or the 1380s, that is why he was not mentioned in the sources prior to 1405. No information has survived on the icon-painter's parents. Some researchers derive the nickname Rublev from the word 'rubel' (a tool for rolling leather) and believe that this may indicate Andrei Rublev's origin from an ancient family of craftsmen. The birthplace of Andrei Rublev and the date of the beginning of his creative biography are unknown. The surviving information connects his name with Moscow or with the execution of Moscow's orders. The time of the saint's monastic tonsure is difficult to trace, but it probably was shortly before 1405. The Life of St Sergius and the later hagiographic tradition indicate that most likely Andrei's monastic life was connected with Andronikov Monastery.

In the 'Reply' by the Venerable Joseph of Volotsk, the icon-painter

Daniel, his friend and co-faster, is called Rublev's 'teacher.' Perhaps the Venerable Joseph meant spiritual discipleship here. The 'Reply' preserved the features of the spiritual appearance of Andrei, who through 'great care about fasting and monastic life' managed to 'lift his mind and thoughts to the immaterial and Divine light.' On the Church feasts, when they were not supposed to paint icons, Andrei and Daniel contemplated icons, 'and, looking at them attentively, they would be filled with Divine joy and light.'

Icons painted by Rublev were extremely valued. According to the 'Legend of the Holy Icon-Painters', all of them were regarded as wonder-working. Among the connoisseurs and collectors of Rublev's icons was the Venerable Joseph of Volotsk. The respect with which Andrei Rublev, 'a man who surpasses everyone in his wisdom', 'pre-eminent among the icon-painters', was held during his lifetime, soon after his repose grew into his veneration as a saint. In the sixteenth century images of Andrei Rublev appeared with a halo on miniatures.

The Life of St Sergius says that Andrei Rublev's last work was frescoes of the Saviour's Cathedral of Andronikov Monastery and the saint passed away at this monastery. However, the Life of the Venerable Nikon claims that Rublev's last work was



Andrei Rublev. Icon Trinity. Early 15th century



Church of the Holy Mandylion at Andronikov Monastery (Moscow)

the painting of the Holy Trinity Cathedral, soon after which he reposed.

In 1988 at the Council of the Russian Church Andrei Rublev was canonised among the venerable fathers, and at the same time a service to him was composed. On April 3, 2001, the Holy Synod approved the Order of Andrei Rublev (3rd degree), conferred to icon-painters for merits in the sphere of church art.

Irina Yazykova, head of the Department of Christian Culture of the Biblical Theological Institute of St Andrew the Apostle (Moscow) and a teacher of the Kolomna Theological Seminary, believes that the ‘Trinity’ icon is one of the most mysterious. ‘When I began to study the theology of the icon (and I have always been interested not only in the artistic aspect, but also in the theological meaning hidden in the icon), the icon of the Trinity was, of course, in the focus of my attention. In this

icon I discovered a fount of theology, saw in it prayer embodied in colours, a whole treatise on the Holy Trinity. Perhaps no one has spoken more deeply about the mystery of the Divine triunity than Andrei Rublev did,’ the art critic adds. She also explains that ‘the novelty of the icon is in the fact that Rublev focused all his attention on the three angels. Before him icon-painters had mainly depicted Abraham’s hospitality, described in chapter 18 of the Book of Genesis, when three angels came to Abraham’s house. And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground (Gen. 18:2). Based on the narrative of this chapter, it becomes clear that God Himself appeared to Abraham.

‘Though there is no consensus among the Holy Fathers or iconographers in the interpretation of this subject, some claimed that the Holy Trinity appeared to Abraham at that moment. And icon-painters depicted three angels in identical robes, pointing to their unity and equality to each other. Other theologians spoke about the appearance of God accompanied by two angels. Then one of them was depicted in Christ’s garments.

‘Andrei Rublev, omitting the everyday details – Sarah, Abraham and the servant slaughtering a calf, that is, everything that icon-painters used to paint before him - introduces us to the direct contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity Itself. In general, this icon is interesting because it is multifaceted, it can be “read” in different ways several times: as the appearance of Christ because the middle angel is depicted in the Saviour’s robes; it can also be read as an image of the Trinity – all the three angels are depicted with almost identical faces. But this is not an illustration of God. This icon, as in a theological treatise, reveals what the Holy Fathers called Three in One – one God in three Persons

or Hypostases. The icon also reflects the liturgical aspect. The silhouettes of two angels sitting on either side form a chalice. And there is a chalice on the throne in the middle – a symbol of the Eucharist, the Sacrifice of Christ.’

According to the famous theologian Archpriest Pavel Velikanov, ‘you can stand for hours in front of the icon of the Holy Trinity by Andrei Rublev. Isn’t this icon, with its unearthly harmony of colours and lines, the deep inner peace of angelic faces, a masterpiece of fine art?... But why exactly was this image destined to become a model of Orthodox teaching? Obviously, it is not just about the unsurpassed skill of the artist’s brush. Are there not enough masterpieces in the world? The icon-painter remarkably succeeded in touching a deep mystery – the mystery of God.’

The priest also draws attention to the fact that the icon of the Holy Trinity, painted by Andrei Rublev, is not only a masterpiece of fine art. The iconographer, according to Father Pavel, could reflect the deepest Christian truth in it: God is not only the Eternal Love of Three Persons. This love is addressed to man, calling him inside the Pre-eternal Council! This is what is expressed in the composition of the icon, in which the viewer feels as if he were inside a circle of Divine Faces turned to him. After all, the God in Whom Christians believe is not the Chief Overseer, much less the Great Avenger. ‘He is the Love that looks into your eyes – and waits for your answer.’

The story of the icon’s return to the Church is complicated: there are concerns about its safety on the part of the museum community. There is no doubt that the Church is no less interested in keeping the great relic safe. But the logic, which even in the period of persecution assumed that works of Christian art should be protected from believers, must be left in the past once and for all.

FEATURE

BLESSING OF THE SMALL MOTHERLAND

Homeland – it is in the field, and on the pond, on the edge of mushrooms, in the August rain, in a good deed, in a pure thought

By ALEXEY SHULGIN



Hot day of haymaking by V. M. Sidorov. 1980

At station, a concrete road, the Church of the Intercession on a high hill blown by all the winds. Once again I visited Golovkovo, a nook where I spent my unassailable childhood. So many memories are associated with this village! What is so special about a village, since there are thousands of them in Russia? But everything is special!

What is Russia? How to understand patriotism? Through happy childhood. Now I especially remember haymaking time, a harvesting period (maybe because fields in Golovkovo are not sown). They were no longer mowed with scythes, but

with the machines. After a day or two the field was cleared. Only huge hills of hay rose three or four meters high. Experiencing fear and delight at the same time, we climbed on the very top and then rolled down. High summer, the redolent smell of cut grass.

Recently I saw haymaking depicted by V. M. Sidorov, and everything came to life in my memory: a distant, irrevocable time. Plowing is also memorable: one or two tractors move smoothly across the field with smoking chimneys, these are the *Kirovets* giants; behind the plow, there are dozens of gulls and rooks flying. They enjoy a feast. And you

stand and look at the arable land, as the earth, just torn up with a metal blade, darkens. When the land-nurse warms up in the sun, sometimes you can see how steam rises to the sky, barely noticeable. Soon the collective farmers will sow fields with rye or potatoes, peas or sunflowers, or wild grasses will rise (if the field is allowed to rest for a year).

I remember once we met a bearded man on a forest road, and my parents, talking quietly, repeated: “Nikonenko”. The actor lived and worked on the role in Golovkovo. Porfiry Krylov (one of the Kukryniksy), who painted a village street, also was thrown into Golovkovo. I look at his picture and recognise the houses.

The Church of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin. As I read in one historical work: “... Peasants from the villages of Voznesensky and Borshchevo were resettled to the wasteland of Shilov near the churchyard, so appeared the village of Golovkovo”. The wooden church in the name of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin appeared in the 1720s. In the 1730s two ponds were dug, wooden mansions erected for the Archbishop of Tver, and the apple orchard planted. In 1856, according to the project of the architect Bykovsky, the construction of a new stone church began. In 1864 the temple was consecrated.

I remember the church in Golovkovo ruined. As boys, we used to head to the stone giant on bicycles, with bated breath we made our way inside, and it was always gloomy and



Golovkovo by P. N. Krylov. 1964

cool there. Pigeons cooed under the dome. Logs laid on the ground, there were no floors. The miraculously preserved murals surprised me for the rest of my life. These images of ancient saints touched the boyish soul. I really wanted to climb on the bell tower, but the stairs rotted and collapsed. Linden leaves rustled behind the windows. Lindens were partially cut down during the restoration of the church. The old murals were painted over and redrawn. But I remember them. The famous artist T. A. Mavrina immortalised the church in Golovkovo and the landscape, which has changed significantly by today. Mavrina said very accurately about the beauty of the Moscow region: “Landscape after landscape. A continuous sequence of landscapes, if the day is to your liking. Where to catch the eye? Our Moscow suburbs

with small rivers, shallow ravines, low ridges, are so beautiful!

I also remember the source of the Istra river. “Two streams, originating in a swamp near the village of Koskovo, merge to form a narrow river with a clearly defined channel and a noticeable stream”, writes Tatyana Alekseevna. “Not far from the place of their confluence, on an elevated bank in the village of Golovkovo, there is a church ...”

I remember the Istra reservoir near Krivtsovo, boats thrown ashore, which seemed to me to be steamboats. We swam in the Istra, across which two logs were thrown as a bridge, and hardly there were places deeper than a metre, we also did not find any whirlpools. Clean and cold Istra. On the other side were the fields sown with sunflowers and corn. Now it looks different: instead

of fields – dachas, dachas, dachas. Recently my older brother asked: “Do you think I can walk along the Istra from Laptevo to Solnechnogorsk?” I doubted very much: the channel became too overgrown, the banks too overbuilt, it was impossible to pass. And in my memory, I am still splashing in the Istra waters, and firs rise above my head.

The surroundings of Solnechnogorsk are rich in memorable places and names. Another village is Chepchikha near the Senezh station. In the 19th century, here was the estate owned by the grandmother of the poet Apollon Maykov, who used to live in Chepchikha and wrote:

*The pictures of the poor midnight countryside!
Wherever I die,
I will remember you when I die;*



Golovkovo by T. A. Mavrina. 1945

*Driving away all evil from a full heart,
Were it you who taught me how to live in
peace with people.*

And another poem by Apollon Nikolaevich includes the following line: “I began to remember myself in a village near Moscow”.

The estate has not been preserved, but the man-made ponds still remain in the old park. I remember how the visitors of the holiday centre rode boats on the pond. Now the holiday centre is closed, and it is impossible to get into the territory of Maykov’s estate. It was pleasant to walk in the park along the earthen paths generously covered with needles. Behind the trees, the Leningrad highway was noisy.

Senezh is a natural wonder! There are two interesting stories to read in an old 1958 book, *The Angler*. “The Senezh Lake, located 60 kilometres

far from Moscow and two kilometres far from the Podsolnechnaya station of the Oktyabr railway, was formed as a result of the construction of an earthen dam built in the valley of the Sestra and Mazikha rivers. Previously, there was a small lake with an area of about 80 hectares, on the site of the current part of the lake known as the Old Senezh. The emergence of the Senezh Lake is attributed to 1825. The creation of this artificial reservoir is associated with the construction of a water system to connect the Volga with Moscow through the Dubna – Sestra – Istra river system. For this, a connecting canal was built between the upper reaches of the Sestra and Istra rivers, which can still be seen in Solnechnogorsk, as well as on the Istra reservoir near Krivtsovo and Mirontsevo”... Reading this is like looking at and “travelling” by a geographical map, it is breathtaking!

Tsar Peter the Great planned to connect Moscow with the Volga in 1722. Engineer Georg Wilhelm de Gennin prepared a project for the Russian autocrat in three versions. But the project was put off for a hundred years. They dug a canal, straightened the Istra, built thirteen stone locks. And in 1844 barge haulers went along the shores of Moscow region, pulling barges with commodities. However, the newly built Nikolaev railway depreciated the brand new waterway. They stopped carrying goods by water, the canals became silted up and overgrown. They were soon abandoned. How ironic fate is, how history is somewhat reminiscent of a mirror...

“Ah, Senezh, my Senezh”, I will drawl out, almost repeating the bard. There was a time! The famous Russian zoologist and fisherman L. P. Sabaneev (1882) mentioned huge

crucian carps of the Senezh weighing 4–5 kilograms, in his book *Fishes of Russia*. We didn’t catch giant crucian carps, but my older brother caught fish in the lake and hunted even more crayfish until the shores were covered with sand, heaping up the beaches.

I recently made a discovery for myself: how many artists painted my Senezh! And the artists are amazing. M. V. Matorin, one of the best engravers, repeatedly came and worked on the Senezh. I consider his landscape with boats as one of the best masterpieces. Many works were created by artists, but seeing is believing.

Having already lived on this earth, I got to Tarakanovo, Shakhmatovo, Boblovo, finally seeing Blok’s estates. I still consider Alexander Alexandrovich Blok as my neighbour and countryman. With trepidation I take books of his poems and read:

*A full moon rose over the meadow
As an unchanging wondrous circle,
It shines and it is silent.
A pale, pale meadow is blooming,
The darkness of the night, creeping over it,
Is resting, sleeping.*

The images are so familiar and dear ... The view of the spruce forest, the jagged skyline (a fabulous ornament!) still delight me. Every time a fairy tale begins with these spruce escallops. It is a pity that the forest near Golovkovo has grown decrepit and was cut down. I can not take buildings and fences now. Where there was an open field – now there are gardeners’ partnerships. But the historical landscape is the property of the people. How to explain then to grandchildren what free rein is, what wide open space is, if they see life from behind a fence?

However, the animals in the zoo do not need freedom. Maybe a person is such an “animal in captivity”? No, I can’t get used to it; A. S. Pushkin, A. K. Tolstoy, N. A. Nekrasov,



Senezh. Station by M. V. Matorin. 1950s

F. I. Tyutchev did not teach that. Homeland – it is in the field, and on the pond, on the edge of mushrooms, in the August rain, in a good deed, in a pure thought.

My heart pulsates in my chest in anticipation that in thirty minutes the bus will take me to Ozhogino or Tarakanovo.

My native land, you remain native even when unrecognisable. The forest has grown decrepit, partially cut down, but even after forty years I know how to get to the mushroom fields or the old Kvashnino road, where, in my memory, cattle were driven from Kvashnino to Golovkovo. How beautiful were the fields

sown with peas near Subbotino! As boys, we raided them, when the watchman might be angry. I knew many villagers: I remember how a crooked, fat peasant transported manure on a cart. Once, in bad weather, his horse pulled a car out of the mud. In Laptevo, behind the vegetable gardens, there was a stable. None of the old village acquaintances is alive, and the landscape has changed since then. But why does the soul hurt and pull me to the native ashes?

I wanted love for our small homeland not to leave us, like a parental blessing. This is the only way to retain happiness ...

ON THE ROAD TO DISCOVERIES OF ART

In search of Canova's Marble Bust of Peace

By EUGENE EDELMAN



Antonio Canova: Marble Bust of Peace, private collection

Artistic discoveries don't happen by accident; and on the way to them you have to study, read, explore, observe, develop taste and philosophy, train in this, like an Olympian before competitions – in general, be ready to discover...

I was born after WWII, in the former Soviet Union, and was raised in Moscow's Kutuzovskii Prospekt district. Since childhood I was exposed to the historical events of the Russian Great Patriotic War of 1812.

Upon the French entering Moscow they found the city burning from many fires; they looted what they could including art, and soon retreated back.

The Russian army pursued Napoleon's army all the way to France, reaching Paris on March 31st, 1814.

During the occupation of Paris Emperor Alexander I purchased from Napoleon's former wife Joséphine the sculpture of the *Three Graces* by Antonio Canova (1757–1822), which was the most famous contemporary artwork to be found in Paris.

The most fascinating of Canova's works in Russian collections was the *Statue of Peace*, commissioned in 1811 by Count Nikolai P. Rumyantsev (1754–1826), then Russian Foreign Minister.

The Rumyantsev family had a long and distinguished history as peacemakers. Count Nicolai's father, the great military commander Pyotr Alexandrovich Rumyantsev-Zadunaisky, had forced the Ottoman Sultan to sue for peace during the first Russo-Turkish War in 1774. His grandfather, Count

Alexander Ivanovich Rumyantsev, had concluded the Treaty of Albo in 1743, ending the Russo-Swedish War of 1741–1743.

Count Nicolai Rumyantsev, a Russian patriot, and supporter of the Treaty of Tilsit (1807) that established peace between Russia and France, also made peace proposals to Britain to avoid war...

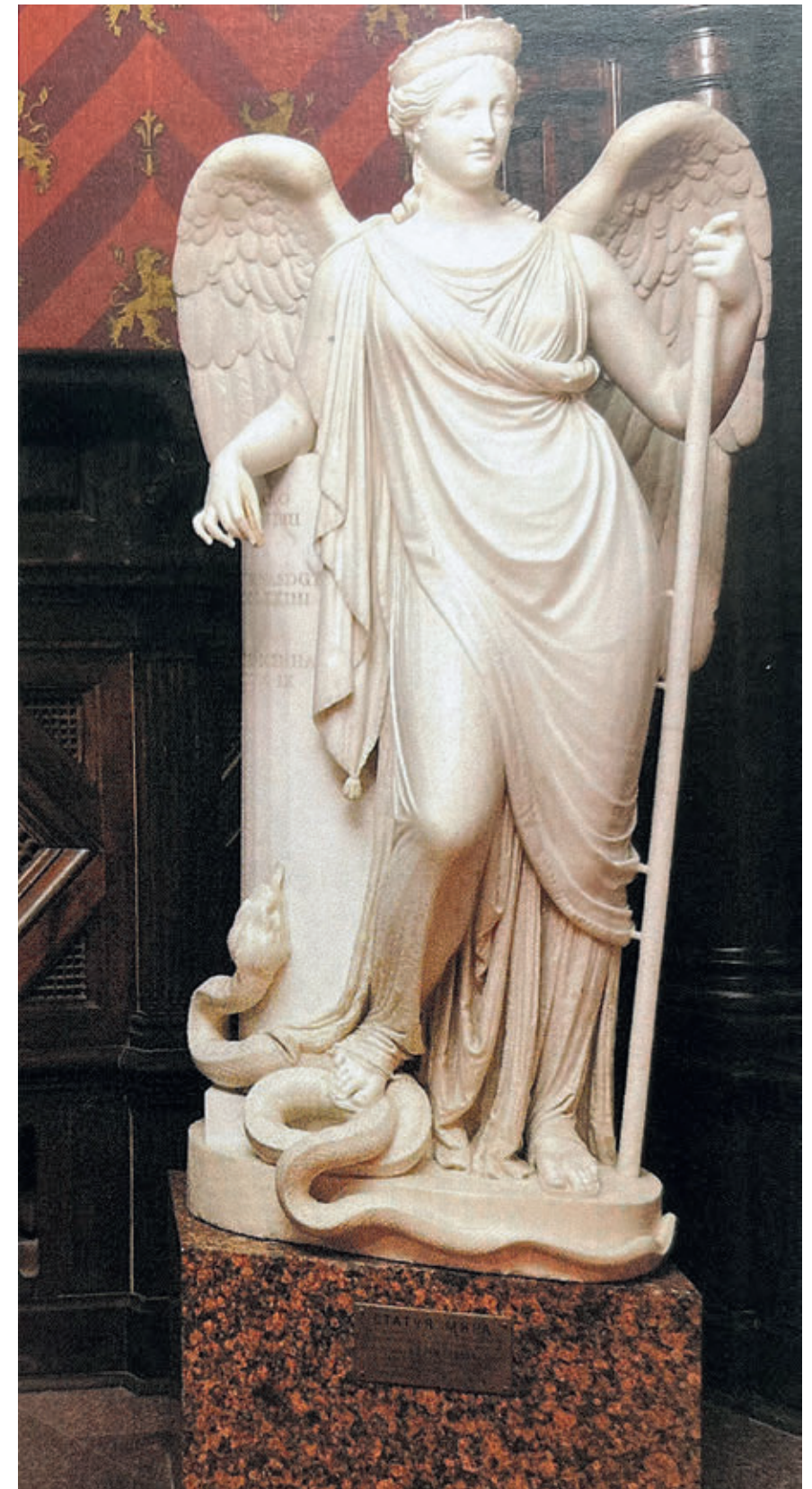
His commission for a *Statue of Peace* in 1811 was intended to serve for a memorial to his family's role as peacemakers in Europe. Due to the French invasion of Russia in 1812, the statue was delivered to St. Petersburg only in 1816, after the final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815.

One hundred years later, the *Statue of Peace*, like many other works of art in Russian collections, came under different ownership: following the 1917 Revolution, the new Soviet government nationalised many works of art belonging to private collections; and sold some to the West to raise money.

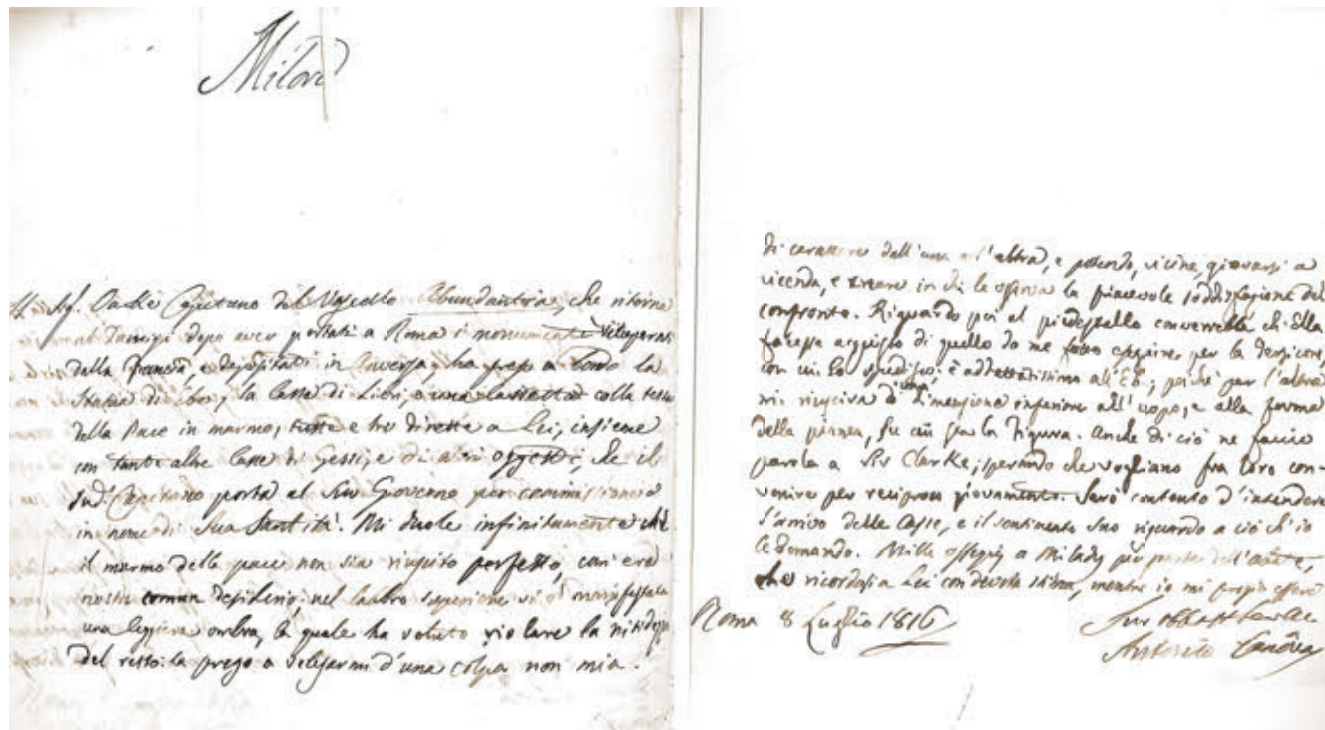
The most remarkable decision made by Stalin was to distribute works of art from Russian collections between the sixteen republics, which were incorporated in the USSR, and he believed never would be independent from him. The *Statue of Peace* was given to Ukraine.

Canova's original catalogue of works compiled as early as 1823 also includes a *Bust of Peace* (derived from the *Statue of Peace*). It is stated to have been given by the artist to Lord Cawdor (John Campbell (Lord Cawdor) was Canova's earliest British patron) in 1814, therefore preceding the completion of Rumyantsev's full statue in 1815. Further research revealed that this *Bust of Peace* was last seen in the London Royal Academy of Arts' Exhibition of 1817.

Lord Cawdor travelled to Rome, late in 1814, to visit Canova. The artist had been developing the concept of *Ideal Heads* ("Teste Ideal") with



Antonio Canova: Marble Statue of Peace



Antonio Canova: Letter of March 6, 1816 to Lord Cawdor, informing him of the arrival of Bust of Peace – courtesy Carmarthenshire Archive Service

a specific purpose of gifting them. The *Bust of Peace* being just completed, Lord Cawdor received it as a present symbolising the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

In Paris, Lord Cawdor again met Canova who had been appointed by Pope Pius VII to seek retribution for the works of art looted by Napoleon's Armies from the Vatican and Rome.

All in all, Canova's *Bust of Peace* embodies the epoch... of "war and peace".

Four more *Ideal Heads* of different subjects were received by British dignitaries amongst which the *Head of a Dancer* received by the Duke of Wellington – deriving from the full statue "Danzatrice" acquired by Emperor Alexander I (now in Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg).

...Two hundred years later however, the missing *Bust of Peace* was left unidentified when it appeared at auction in London in a garden statuary sale!

Being ready with prior knowledge, there was no other matter but to secure it; purchase and "discover" it! Painstaking restoration revealed without any doubt it was an original missing work by Canova: the *Bust of Peace*...

Establishing the provenance and authentication began by me and my partner Princess Anne de La Tour d'Auvergne, with finding out whether the Cawdor's Estate (Castle Cawdor) had any documentation to finalise this remarkable discovery... We were advised this task will be very difficult as no access to the Cawdor Archives had been granted to scholars before, nor publications enabled... However, we decided to write directly to Lady Cawdor, proprietor of the Estate; and to our great delight the answer arrived where Lady Cawdor asked Anne if she was the daughter of Prince Henry de La Tour d'Auvergne whom she knew years ago in Paris... Once assured Anne was indeed his daughter Lady Cawdor instructed the Keeper of the Cawdor historical

documentation to help with anything we needed, including examining original letters etc., for the purpose of publication if needed. What a discovery that was!

The research into Lord Cawdor was more than satisfactory. It revealed for the first time the patron and Canova's long-standing friendship from 1787, through their personal correspondence, and related to the *Bust of Peace* – while the chronology of this object of art was unequivocally settled. We discovered that the two-hundred-year-old-missing masterpiece had been sent to England on July 1816 aboard the ship *Abundancia* (which also returned to Rome the monuments recovered from France) to be exhibited on Canova's request by Cawdor at the Royal Academy in 1817 – whence by August 1819 it would be dispatched to Lord Cawdor's home of Stackpole in Wales.

Lord Cawdor passed away on June 1st, 1821; Canova on October 13, 1822.

Meantime, we were informed by Canova's museum (the Gypsoteca) they did not own the plaster model "with black dots" (which permitted the precise transfer by Canova to the medium of marble) for the *Bust of Peace*. The Gypsoteca stated that three plasters had existed originally: One was destroyed during a 1917 bombing, another was not traceable, and one had been donated to the Museum of Bassano del Grappa in the middle of the 19th Century... but was missing from their inventory.

As we lost hope, a message came from Professor Mario Guderzo (director of the Gypsoteca) that while working in the Bassano Museum he did come across "a plaster bust with black dots" in their storage facilities! He had arranged for photos to be taken at the time. It turned out to be the original plaster for *Bust of Peace*, and this became another discovery...!

Lord Cawdor's Stackpole House's inventory did not include the *Bust of Peace* marble either. That is until, during archival research, we found a catalogue from *Strutt & Parker / Loft & Warners' Auctioneers* mentioning a "Lady wearing a Diadem... 21 inches high" under lot 556 of the Statuary section, for the public auction of the contents of Lord Cawdor's beautiful one hundred and fifty rooms' mansion of "Stackpole Court in Pembrokeshire", which unfolded *in situ* from November 19th to the 21st 1962 before the mansion was destroyed...

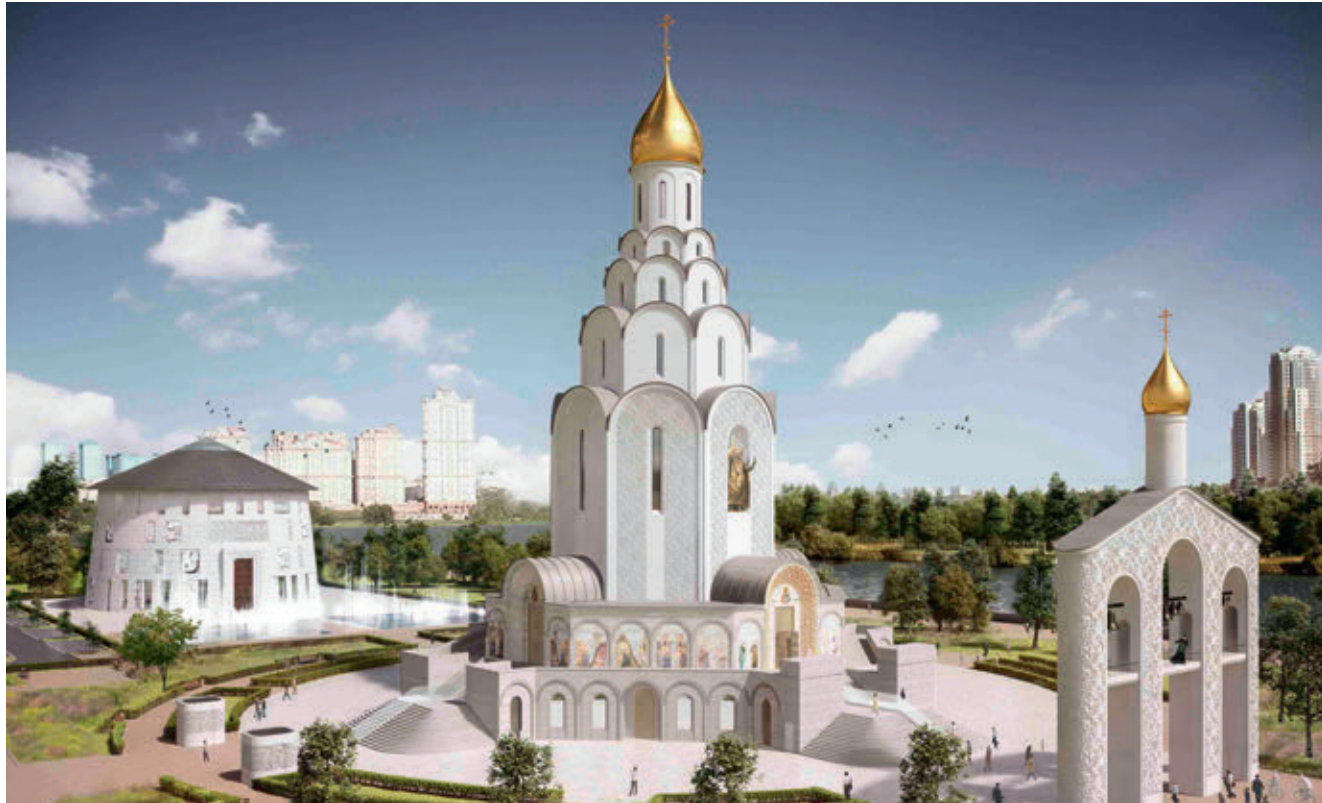
We realised this unidentified marble bust "of a Lady" was in fact the *Bust of Peace* last seen in the 1817 Royal Academy exhibition in London! This concluded our research.

But we would never know why the *Bust of Peace* was hidden from view until 1962 and could again end up as garden statuary... were it not for our discovery.

The bust was purchased and remains in a private collection.



Antonio Canova: Pointed-plaster Bust of Peace – courtesy Museo Canova & Gipsoteca Possagno



A CHURCH FOR THE FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF RUS'

On 28th of July, 2023, the feast of the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Grand Prince Vladimir and the 1035th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus', the Church of the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir will open on the embankment of the Moskva River in the innovative quarter of the Tushino district of Moscow. It will be at the centre of the new church complex, according to the website of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The church is fifty-eight metres (up to the cross) in height. Inside it is traditionally divided into three parts: a porch, a nave and a sanctuary.

The architectural ensemble also includes a cultural and exhibition centre, a free-standing bell-tower and a chapel. A picturesque park will

be laid out around it, forming a single stylistic space with the church grounds.

One of the main adornments of the church is extensive mosaic panels on the facade of the central building reflecting the history of the Russian Orthodox Church which spans over 1,000 years, starting from the historic moment when Prince Vladimir chose the faith up to the restoration of desecrated cathedrals, monasteries and churches in the late twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries.

There will be figures of the holy equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir and Princess Olga at the main (western) entrance to the church.

On the east side, in the central niche, an icon of the Most Holy

Trinity will be installed, flanked by figures of the holy Right-Believing Prince Dimitry Donskoy and the Venerable Euphrosyne of Moscow.

The Right-Believing Princes Alexander Nevsky and Daniel of Moscow will be depicted in the side niches around the north portal.

And in the side niches around the south portal – the holy Princes and Passion-Bearers Boris and Gleb on one side and the Right-Believing Prince Andrei Bogolyubsky on the other.

The author of the design of the Spiritual and Cultural Centre is Sergei Tchoban, a Russian and German architect, artist, honorary member of the Russian Academy of Arts and the Association of German Architects (BDA).

The author of the sculpture of the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Grand Prince Vladimir is Alexander Rukavishnikov, a People's Artist of the Russian Federation and a full member of the Russian Academy of Arts.



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