

Atomic Orthodoxy

In 2015 or 2018, the media published a picture of Russian Orthodox priests blessing nuclear missiles; whichever date it was, it was after the taking of Crimea from Ukraine. A Moscow Patriarchate priest explained that these weapons were "perceived as a means of protection and salvation."

Recently Kirill, the Moscow Patriarch, stated that those Russian soldiers who die in battle in Ukraine go to heaven.

Religions supporting war has been known throughout history. Even in the Roman Catholic Church with the Military Ordinary for the United States, Francis Cardinal Spellman, when speaking on the morality of the War in Viet Nam said, "My country, right or wrong, my country." American Catholics who wanted to become conscientious objectors could not do so because the Church's reputation through the bishops was the "war church."

It changed because of two events. First, Archbishop Jean Jadot, the nuncio to the United States, recommended the appointment of bishops whose experience was pastoral (and they were younger). This new generation, after the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, condemned the arms race "as one of the greatest curses on the human race."

Regarding nuclear arms, "Men of this generation should realize that they will have to render an account of their warlike behavior, the destiny of generations to come depends largely on the decisions they make today." Secondly, the bishops realized their fight against abortion and the lives lost there were endangered by their silence on nuclear armament, which could destroy the planet. So, the bishops in the United States changed positions in the 1980s because the November election talked about "winnable nuclear war" Then Archbishop Joseph Bernardin headed a committee to draft a pastoral letter on war and peace.

Like the Americans, some Russian Orthodox priests felt, "One can talk about the blessing of a warrior on military duty in defense of the fatherland," said Savva Tutunov, a bishop of the Moscow Patriarchate. "At the end of the corresponding ritual, the personal weapon was also blessed—precisely because it is connected to the individual person who is receiving the blessing. By the same reasoning, weapons of mass destruction should not be sanctified." Based on this understanding, a Russian Orthodox committee on ecclesiastical law recommended that the clergy concentrate on blessing soldiers rather than weapons.

Others felt differently. Vsevolod Chaplin, an influential priest and former spokesman for the Patriarch said that nuclear weapons were the country's "guardian angels" and necessary to preserve "Orthodox civilization" adding "Only nuclear weapons protect Russia from enslavement by the West."

The Patriarch has not yet responded to the committee's recommendation. However, Patriarch Kirill has credited Russia's nuclear capability with "preventing World War III" and ensuring Russia's state sovereignty.

Russia's nuclear arsenal also has its own patron saint—St. Seraphim, whose remains were discovered in 1991 in a disused monastery in Sarov, a central Russia town home to several essential nuclear facilities of the Soviet era.

The America Catholic Church has its roots in the West. The Russian Church has its origins in the East and, in particular, in Byzantium. This is an important difference in two ways. One: Moscow has claimed it is the legitimate successor of the First Rome, followed by Byzantium, and now Moscow is the voice of the Church established by Jesus Christ. The second is the view that then in Byzantium—and now in Moscow—the Church and the Empire constitute a single divine-human organism. The specifics of Russia's "sacred foundation," was laid by Sergius of Radonezh. However, the clash with the West created the need to develop a solid autocratic state, the beginning of which was laid by Ivan the Terrible. As a result, Russia miraculously avoided turning into the periphery of the West and turned into a "second world," taking pride in its place in international organizations.

There were theological writings concerning Jesus being a Russian—an interesting sidebar to all this. In catechetical material and theological writings, Jesus' Jewish ethnicity disappeared. "On Jesus Christ's Ethnic Origin," published in "The Duel", a weekly newspaper, was widely referred to in other periodicals, including *Russkiy Poryadok* [Russian Order.] The author, E. Klimchuk, a Russian Academy of Military Science member, expressed the opinion that Jesus looked Slavic and spoke ancient Russian. The level of Klimchuk's lack of scholarly awareness can be revealed by this opening phrase, "There is practically no problem concerning the racial affiliation of our Savior. No one ever painted Him as an African or Chinese." Klimchuk also states that all the apostles except Judas were non-Jewish, and the proof is that all of them were killed by Jews except Judas. It was St. Paul who, according to Klimchuk, distorted the teaching of Jesus and convinced everyone that Jesus and the Twelve were Jews. Jesus' Russian ethnicity can also be proved, Klimchuk believes, by Jesus' cry on the cross, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*" (Mark 15:33). These are, he states, contrary to the traditional understanding, uttered not in Aramaic but in Sanskrit/Ancient Russian (the latter two languages Klimchuk believes to be identical and must be translated, "O God the Creator, Your representative on Earth offers Himself as a sacrifice."

When you combine a Russian Messiah, who in the Byzantine model has united Himself with the state desiring to carry out the mission of salvation and putting an end to sinful actions of humanity, a tiny spark can bring about a large fire. In 2018 the Orthodox Church of Ukraine separated from the Russian Orthodox Church.

Ukraine is, as Kirill stated, part of the canonical territory of Moscow. You have, in his opinion, the stabbing of the heart because not only did they leave the third Rome and the Russian Messiah, they joined with the decadent West.

The decadent West is part of the Soviet ideology that was not lost with the wall's fall. Putin has been taken by an "ultranationalist view of Russia's destiny as a conservative



empire in perpetual conflict with the liberal Western world."

Priests who came to the United States thought they were coming here to restore morality and were shocked that we were not as decadent as they were told. But things have changed and are changing. Putin points out that in Ukraine, homosexuality is legal, but same-sex marriages are not, but because of the war, there is a movement to make it so. People can have sex change therapy. Yet 86% feel that homosexual activity should not be legal.

The government and the media are trying to make a social change. This is why Putin is trying to save Ukrainians from their immoral government, or so he says. Viewing LGBTQ rights in Russia, the only places they are not discriminated against is in serving in the military and giving blood. No marriages, no housing rights, and no right to adopt are the Russian reforms that Putin wants for Ukraine.

Russians viewing themselves as the model society is not just something that came about in the Soviet Union. When viewed from the lens of Russian history, Putin's expansionist war in Ukraine is not exceptional. Russia became the largest country in the world by taking over other people's land. What is hopefully different now is a view held by billions of people that taking over another's territory is not acceptable. The Guardian editorial board said, "Kirill's militant fusion of ethnonationalism, authoritarianism, and religious identity is beyond the pale."

This Russian nationalism has been incor-

porated into Russian Orthodoxy. This has influenced a theology concerning nuclear missiles. Putin's words from a press conference in the Kremlin were that Orthodoxy (the "traditional denomination") and the nuclear shield are two components of Russia's internal and external security. At the same time, "atomic Orthodoxy" influenced the political worldview of Vsevolod Chaplin, mentioned earlier, and Ivan Okhlobystin. The doctrine of "Atomic Orthodoxy" presupposes the creation of conditions for "ac-



quiring the Holy Spirit" on the territory of Russia, including "defense from demons" and people possessed by demons. To protect the interests of Russian and Orthodox Russia, it is necessary to be a "strong power." Russia's mission is to preserve Holy Russia and prepare for the Second Coming. Nuclear weapons are perceived as a guarantee against "premature apocalypse" (someone else using nuclear weapons against Russia, bringing about the end of the world) and as deterrence of "Satanocracy."

In the 2007 article by Egor Kholmogorov "Putin and Atomic Orthodoxy", the author concludes: "Putin linked Orthodoxy to

the country's internal security, and nuclear weapons to its external security is not accidental. This is a comprehensive 'Russian protection' for defense against demons and for defense against people most often taught by the same demons.

"Putin's main 'message', easily read through a variety of answers, statements, and jokes, was still a message about a strong Russia. This is a message that the Russian Atlantean is really spreading his shoulders and is once again entering world history as a full participant.

"Atomic Orthodoxy, therefore, is not just a strategy for the future. This is Russia's eschatological strategy, its strategy for the entire history of this world, if we, [the Russians] of course, want to preserve existence for the duration of this story, and not to leave its stage prematurely, like extras killed in the course of the play. If we want God and the world to 'remember' our 'last phrase', then we simply have no other way but Atomic Orthodoxy."

Trying to understand where this movement in Russian Orthodox theology which Putin is using leads us to ask "will he use atomic bombs? If Putin feels he is losing, it will cause him to "lose face" and will imply that Russian morality is inferior to Western morality". Will Putin expand upon tactical nukes? The answer is "yes" because if Russia is attacked by nuclear weapons it is a sign of the age of the end of the world and Russia will end in glory while going up in flames with the rest of the world. This is just one opinion of...

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