

The Ukrainian Orthodox Conception of Sobornopravna: The Prophets, Nominalism and the Ontology of Empire

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Those reading about Ukrainian Orthodoxy will come across the term Sobornopravna (Соборноправність). It is nothing less than the politico-social theology of the Orthodox church, one deriving its substance from the prophetic life of the Old Testament. Sobornopravna is a mentality rather than a set of well defined ideas, as well as a basis for social and economic organization. Christ quoted from the Old Testament on a regular basis, and sought to recreate Israel from the ashes of Phariseeism, which culminated in the Orthodox faith and tradition. Christ spoke like the prophets and cited them all the time. He did not come to provide a political or economic vision, largely because he assumed that his hearers were well versed in the prophets, who did. It is not an accident that the prophets are included in the canon of scripture, where they remain, almost entirely unread. Christ cannot be understood outside the prophetic tradition.

The defenders of royalism, that is, of the sacerdotal, decentralized form that typified early Russia and Serbia, have refused, practically to this day, to formulate any sort of coherent theory where the ideas of social Orthodoxy can appeal to the masses of farmers and workers in the western world. This very brief paper will, it is hoped, be a beginning of some new ideas of royalist and neo-medievalist political thought to counter the empty slogans of the republicans and parliamentarians who insist that history has largely stopped with them.

Modern political thought is a void. Political theory in the academy is controlled by a handful of elite foundations who finance the major journals whereby these organizations decide on the “big names” in this field which provide, in turn, the acceptable “parameters” of “responsible debate.” Liberal white males in academia live in fear: the term “racist” or “sexist” fills them with dread. Their career – the very easy job and prestige they enjoy – would evaporate under such an accusation. The result is that they overcompensate.

This is normal in all academia, from the evolutionary dogma in biology to a saccharine liberalism in “social theory.” It is, like everything else in modern life, a lie, or more precisely, a manipulative image. These images masquerade as “reality.” They combine some fact with a great degree of emotional baggage. They cloak those who actually make socially relevant decisions. In many ways, they are the Kantian “noumena” properly considered, largely working in secret and are “unknowable.”

As the western world begins to breath its last, drowning in debt, mental illness and a low birth rate, Orthodox strugglers must be prepared for the coming cataclysm with a coherent theory, or rather, a vision, of communal liberty, economic equality (as mandated in the Law of Moses) and neo-medieval sacerdotal monarchy to replace the dying “democratic oligarchy” that typifies the pageant of bankers and buccaneer capitalists which goes by the generic name of “American politics.”

The question for all Orthodox people is not merely the notion of “church government,”

itself a cliché, but of the Orthodox way of life in respect to this government, that is, the notion of sobornost'. Administration never has autonomy in respect to what it administers; it is a slave to the tradition and mystic life of the church and its monastic core. The Orthodox, agrarian and ethnic tradition (actually, three sides of the same triangle) provide a means whereby society can be regenerated and restored, Christianity can return to its Orthodox roots, and the local can prevail over the international and "papal."

Administration, if it takes a life beyond tradition and local custom, strangles the latter, demanding that everything be sublimated under the Procrustean bed of ideological fashion. Hence, the policy of the Antiochian Orthodox jurisdiction in America today, where conciliarity has been abolished in favor of the administration under its dictatorial bishop PHILIP, is an error of the first magnitude. Tradition lives within the lifeblood of the people, the local institutions (so long as they are truly independent) exist independently of central authority. Modernism, however, needs to be imposed by force, and hence demands "bureaucracy" and "administration."

The idea of "national anarchy," or even better, the Hegelian syndicate, is merely a restatement of the ideas of Johann Herder and Mykola Kostomarov. It is related to the notion of sobornost' or the ontological context of the synod, defined as ethno-religious particularity; its tradition and way of life, with respect to only its inner principle, i.e. the content, rather than its external coating, the "administration," the realm of money and power. In ancient Israel, it is represented by the tribal organization of Shechem, and the existence of decentralized shrines, later to be abolished under the rule of the temple, and, in turn, the temple itself became paganized under Solomon the Apostate, in an almost mirror image of papism and its deification of "bureaucracy."

Theoretical work on Sobornopravna, unlike sobornost, is rare and amateurish. From the Kievan patriarchate, we read:

Sobornopravnist is the popular control of all church affairs, it is the foundation of not only the Ukrainian, but in general the whole Apostolic Church. Sobornopravnist represents 1) The right of elected clergy; 2) The right of superintendence over church property, and 3) the right of the church population to participate in all matters of church life: charitable, economic, educational, liturgical and canonical and even dogmatic. According to this, the bishops have lost their leading role in the Church. Ecclesiastical authority was transferred to the hands of elected councils at the national, metropolitan, county, township and parish levels (Lesyuk, 2006).¹

This is a terrible definition. It is mere formal administration in a "representative" bureaucratic form. It is rhetoric only, since all such experiments, without exception, have led to a professional class of bureaucratic oligarchs that end up running the "council" or whatever the term used. More recent studies suggest that this is the understanding of the church as more than bishops. It is the church as such, not a small layer of often alienated "theological professionals."

It is more useful to see it in the local. In other words, when the local was overthrown in favor of the central, local tradition was lost, and the church, the people of Israel, became pawns in the power politics of the age. Thence, the power of the center became autonomous from the

1 Lesyuk, Svyasch (2006) Canons of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches UAOC 1921: A Critical Analysis. Church History: Kievan Patriarchate (in Ukrainian). Also see the canons themselves from the 1921 "sobor": Діяння Всеукраїнського Православного Церковного Собору в м. Києві 14-30 жовтня 1921 р. І Канони УАПЦ. (Frankfurt and Main, 1946)

tradition. In Israel's case, due to its involvement with the pagan Tyrian economy, itself a descendant of Nimrodian, Babylonian materialism, fell into heresy typified by Solomon's apostasy.

The neo-papal mentality provides a top-down orientation to church and state; grace and law exist as the constructs of elites, to be dispensed to us benighted natives. The reality of the Orthodox ethnic tradition is another matter entirely. But it is this distinction that animates present Orthodox modernism, and, thence, of the obsession with bureaucracy and central control that typifies modern nominalism. When the individual alone is assumed to exist, community is quickly translated into collectivity.

Nominalism is essential because it is the polar opposite of Sobornopravna. The individual and the collective are equally alienated and equally based on the primacy of the individual. The collective is something created by force. The community, the sobor, does not come from the individual, but produces something quite different, the person. Alexander Dugin writes on nominalism in his Political Philosophy:

If in the western Middle Ages was dominated by the approach of realism (Thomism), then the transition to modern times – in the era of the Protestant Reformation – has become increasingly dominated by nominalism. It is the idea of the new man. Nominalism best describes the spirit of modernity. Recall that nominalism is based on the conviction that there are no ideas, no sacred realities. It rests on the assumption that all that exists is a world of material things and the human mind constructs ideas and concepts on the basis of observation. For the more efficient means of manipulating nature, rationalism began to “abstract,” giving “names” to things that are arbitrary vocal equivalents. . . . The sacred intuition of being in the world, the penetration into its sacred dimension and the experience of the “divine presence” is discarded as the empiricists falsify the picture of the observed world. The empirical-nominalist approach created a radical desacralization of the world. Western man lost his cults and rituals, traditions and myths, ancient covenants and traditions, spiritual experience and religious contemplation, intuition and a taste of the sacred. This is the essence of tradition regardless of the society. Empiricism undermines the deep roots of what has been defined as the primal traditional idea (Dugin, 212-213, translation mine).

The possibility for community, for the sobor, was no more. Grace made no sense in the nominal world since there was no place for it. All meaning was arbitrary and all ideas artificial. Words were separated from objects, which means, if language mediates thought and words give reality to things, that whoever controls language controls existence, the very notion of what is real.

Church and state are meant to be governed by the local sobor, in the broadest sense of that word, viz., the way of life of a local parish, skete or brotherhood. Doctrine is “put in motion” by the day to day lives of the faithful, animated itself by the local parish family and the local skete, each existing in a realm of equality. Without the local skete or hermitage, a perennial aspect of Orthodoxy in Europe, the parish ends up a rather mechanical and perfunctory set of rites rather away from the understanding of the faithful, and particularly a faithful in modern America who is more often than not dictated to by media and fashion.

It is the life of the parish, the local tradition and the ethno-communal imperative that is at

the root of church government, and is at the basis of law, justice and a future world order. It is “anarchistic” in that it rejects a powerful central administration and defines justice as congruent with local Christian custom (about the last thing the black-clad collegiate, upper middle class “anarchist” would say). It is “reactionary” in that it is based on the traditional life of the village, skete and parish family, where political and economic decisions are made communally, a tradition as old as its fight against “civilization.”² Civilization is itself deified in the person of Janus, the two headed god of settled life, depicted as bringing the benighted herd into elite, high-tech civilization with its social science, control and regimentation of all aspects of life.

“Anarchy,” in a certain atavistic way, merely refers to the absence of centralized structures of rule, or even better, the absence of administration, but an acceptance of authority; these of course, being two very different things. The patristic tradition realizes only the relation of bishop (an office, not a person) to congregation or monastery, not to distant patriarchs or synods. When the synod, in a narrow sense, begins to believe themselves to be above local custom and the very font of truth and justice, however, problems develop, and the church is vitiated – alienation is the result.

If law is based upon local tradition and ethnic custom, then law is a decentralized idea *ipso facto*. What rules is the ethnos, represented at the parish, village, region or monastic level, and, in fact, is a naturally developing synthesis of all of these, despite often serious outside shocks; in reality, the commune, in the broader sense meant by Kerevskii, is precisely a synthesis of the means and results of the community responding and adjusting to those outside shocks. Without these, there is no Orthodoxy, but rather a set of abstract Christological statements without living tradition and the day to day devotion that is at the center of the church. This is the result of “Americanization” (a code word for not having to listen to anyone from the old country), leading to a perfunctory, theologically minimalist worship that lies at the heart of American vulgarity.

The relation of bishop to parish or monastery is a mystical one, one based on prayer and the shared ascetic struggle rather than of domination. The bishop is the spokesman for the diocesan synod. He speaks in the plural as “we.” This is not an accident. All other things being equal, it is a structure and hierarchy based not on power, but on prayer and struggle, the life of the church and the reception of grace being a radically egalitarian venture (so to speak), with hierarchy being understood only relatively. Insofar as the confrontation of heresy is concerned, this is as much the concern of the laity and monastics, in correcting their bishop, as well as the reverse. Today, it is the bishops, by and large, who are the bought purveyors of heresy under the guise of being “relevant.”

Thus, the idea of Sobornopravna’ shows Orthodoxy as a local affair, and approaches it as a decentralized group of dioceses and monasteries largely self-governing and dependent on the ancient tradition of the church as its constitution. Freedom, hence, is the freedom from internal passions (relevant to individuals as well as “institutions”), such as lust or greed, that enslave the individual as much as any external administration. Such passions can turn the relation between abbot and monk, pastor to parishioner, or bishop to priest as one of alienation and control, where the institution is seen as a foreign oppressor, or as a bind based on love and devotion to the common tradition.

This is the idea of authority: authority over the passions and, hence, the development of the inner freedom absolutely necessary for the rational life. The approach approximates that of the Russian non-possessors and Old Believers, those who believed in a monarchy that was

2 Civilization is defined here as the opposite of culture, the way Spengler defined it.

sacerdotal rather than administrative, and the rule of the ancient canons and Russian tradition over any speculative system of theology, eventually vitiated by Peter. This mentality is also to be found, significantly, in the monastic structure of early medieval Ireland, prior to the Norman invasion which imposed the Roman, top down diocesan structure ultimately dependent on Rome and those who ruled her.

Rather than depending on a strict rule, monks approach their lives as the Athonite hesychasts do as well as the Irish Culdees: based on the individual hermit or skete, struggling through various individual- based ascetic practices under the guidance of an experienced elder. The tradition was local, and based on the lives of the saints who had gone before rather than on any formal rule or ideology of life strictly considered. Local Orthodox, within this tradition, meet on occasion to strengthen one another in the faith, abjure heresy and develop further the local Christian life.

Establishment “anarchism” is a fraud in that it provides an outlet and justification for individual passions, somehow themselves to find a home in the “collective,” which is always a vague, ideological term with, at root, nothing to hold it together. The addition of the word “national” or “ethno” to anarchism is precisely to provide that root, that of the ethnos, local tradition and local democratic life, or more precisely, the notion of representation, where local ethnic custom is the basis for law and inspiration. It is never an invitation to heresy, but it must be borne in mind that the Orthodox dogma which we follow is derived from the collective tradition of the Orthodox people and their local traditions, brought together in the ecumenical synods. Nothing that did not agree with this local “sobor” was ever accepted as authoritative , and what was considered authoritative was not so much what bishops voted on, but rather what the tradition of the church had ratified over time. The local sobor, referring to a way of life rather than an administrative structure, is the cell, the “individual” of the Orthodox church, and it itself is responsible for the confrontation of heresy and schism. It was these cells who came together to destroy Arianism or monophysitism, not the emperor or the patriarch.

The local parish, the ethnic tradition, the skete or hermitage; this is the basis of Orthodox tradition and local rule, it is even the basis of the ecumenical mindset of the church, and can be reduced no further than this. Only when the state and church become centralized, such as the Israelites under Solomon, Russia under Peter, or Ireland under the later Normans does heresy and the worldliness of “administration” find a doorway to invade the church, the rites become sterile and perfunctory, and the church becomes a department of state, a pleasant set of rituals that connect the individual in a sentimental way, to their ancestors. What is more interesting is that the Nimrodian mentality of the ancient world is at the origin of this idea: the ideas of “civilization” and “enlightenment.”

The ancient hesychast tradition is based on local hermitages, bound together not by formal ties, but by tradition and the methods of prayer: interior silence, the Jesus prayer and the liturgy. It does not point to the “right synod” to belong to, but rather to the joy of Orthodox life, Christ and his peace.

The state and the economy are at best necessary evils, at worst objects that will distract us from the love of the Trinity and the mystical life. The mystical life by definition does not require the formal power of the state or even of the synod, but a truly Orthodox approach to God through prayer and struggle. It took SCOBA to convince us all that such things were not necessary.

Archimandrite Georgios of Athos says:

The roots of neptic life and of Hesychia in accordance with God are found in the

Old Testament. The Prophet Moses received experience and knowledge of God on Mount Horeb, when faced by the strange sight of the blazing bush, which did not burn, he was initiated into rejecting every worldly belief, reflected in the removal of his sandals, and to contemplate in reflection and riddle the mystery of the divine Incarnation. . .The holy Apostles worked exclusively in the world and in the midst of distractions, noise and danger, but deep inside they remained hesychasts and workers of nepsis and prayer. Their apostolic work was not a social reform program, but the rebirth of souls through Christ (Gregorios, 2012).

And St. Gregory Palamas writes the following:

It is for this reason then, that the lover of perfect communion with God avoids the technologically assisted life, and chooses the monastic and un-structured state, and he eagerly offers himself to the sanctuary of stillness, without the obligations or worries of life, relieved from all other (worldly) relationships. Thus, having released his soul from every material bond, to the extent that this is attainable, he attaches his nous to the unceasing prayer to God, and having, through it, concentrated the nous entirely into himself, he finds a new and secret ascent to the heavens, the intangible obscurity of the apocryphal stillness, as one would say. And having precisely concentrated his nous into himself with secret bliss, in a state of utterly simple but perfect and sweet tranquility, and in genuine silence and speechlessness, he flies above all creation. And thus, having been removed from himself and become entirely God's, he sees the glory of God and contemplates divine light (Quoted from Georgios, 2012).

Even more telling, St. Basil writes:

Because I propose a perfect community of life, where the attribute of ownership takes place automatically, the community is freed from opposition, and every turbulence, squabble and quarrel end with the stomping of a foot; everything is owned in common, souls, opinions, bodies and all those by whom the bodies are fed and healed; God is in common, reverence is in common, salvation is in common, contests are in common, sufferings are in common, and so are the rewards, which are received by many; and no one is left alone, as he is always with the others. What else could equal such a state? Is there anything more blessed?" (Quoted from Georgios, 2012)

The basis of the Orthodox life then is the mystical contemplation of God, hence all Orthodox people, regardless of their state, are required to take on the discipline of monastics according to their strength, and build their homes into small monasteries. It might be worth noting that the Russian *Domostroi*, the ancient Russian rule for home life, insisted that the head of the family recite Matins, Vespers and the Midnight service every day with the family, and this at a very minimum.

For the Sobornopravna' mentality, the church, its teachings and traditions as manifest in the day to day life of the people are the basis of law and grace. The state provides an artificial border, one that is not co-determinous with the ethnic or religious tradition of the Orthodox

people. The Orthodox are loyal to the tradition of the church or to the Slavic, Greek or western medieval tradition that embodied the life of the saints, and the communities of struggle.

Metropolitan Antony Khrapovitsky writes:

This separation of person and nature in us is not something incomprehensible and abstract, but a truth which is directly affirmed by self-observation and experience. Recognizing an independent personality and freedom of will and action in oneself, each person clearly understands that this independence, this freedom, consists solely in the directing of the energies and properties of the nature shared by all men, each in its own area of specialization, in the development of certain innate inclinations and the destruction of others, while choosing between conflicting inclinations, etc (147).

Nature is understood in two senses: first that which is common to all particulars of any x. Second, that which brings the specific particular to its final end. Hence, there is a human nature, one that is shared by Christ and is now sitting on the right hand of the Father. There is also the specific person that must manifest that nature in a specific way. The church is unified by a single nature that contains many specializations.

In Russia, the Petrine mission is an arcane and occult experiment to vitiate the ancient tradition of Orthodoxy by bringing the Russian tradition, represented by the trans-Volga elders, sketes and the caves, under the control of Janus, or the initiator into “civilization” and “social management.” The basis of Peter and Petrinism is an arcane one, one that is secret, but one that reaches into the very depths of ancient, post-Edenic and post-Noachide life.

Peter’s crimes against the Orthodox church are as horrifying as the Bolsheviks. Establishment historians have erroneously claimed that Tsar Ivan IV was the manifestation of evil, while often giving Peter a pass in the name of “Enlightenment.” However, the Nimrodian ideology behind Peter’s agenda, and even the very name of Petrograd, deserve attention.

Dimitri Pospelovsky, in his *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, might be read as the official OCA version of Russian church history. It is that. But it is skillful in bringing out the criminal nature of Peter’s system, especially chapter 6. The abolition of the patriarchate, taken by itself, is proof of the totalitarian tendencies of the Petrine agenda, one where, like Janus, Peter becomes lord of heaven and earth, dictating to the now headless church his modernizing and Enlightenment agenda.

In 1691, one of the best educated Orthodox apologists in Russia, Fr. Sylvester (Medvedev) was executed, because he had been confessor to Sophia, Peter’s half sister and one-time rival for power in Muscovy. Abbot Abraham was tortured and murdered by Peter’s agents in 1697 because he had written a tract criticizing Peter’s lack of respect for human life. Peter secularized dozens of monasteries, and converted others to hospitals and barracks.

Peter forced bishops to swear that he, not Christ, was their “ultimate judge.” The monastic population declined from 25,000 to 14,000 by 1738 due to forcible secularization of certain monastic houses. The Petrine agent, Theophan Prokopovich, saw to it that six bishops were tortured for criticizing Peter’s abolition of the patriarchate, among other crimes of conscience. Peter’s successors, including Anna, began a major program of secularizing monasteries and confiscating their incomes.

Peter made it his business to forcibly bring Russia “Enlightenment.” Thousands were killed in forced labor projects, especially the creation of Petrograd, where the city, designed to be

a monument of Peter “conquering nature,” was literally built on the thousands of bodies of Cossacks who had frozen to death in its construction (most of whom were Old Believers) as a symbol of his triumph. Quite literally, the corpses of the Orthodox traditionalists were the very “fertilizer” of Peter’s vision.

The word “Peter,” here referring to the city of Petrograd, or the “City of Peter,” is of ancient origin, and is a generic name for all the gods of pagan antiquity, from Mesopotamia to Rome. In other words, Peter did not name his city in some sort of egocentric fit, but as a message to those similarly initiated. In the Lucilli Fragments, it is clear that Pater, or Peter, was the generic name for the chief god of the city, whose rites were sometimes carried out by the familial patriarch, leading to a confusion of pater as father, and peter as city god. Most commonly, Peter referred to the chief god of the city, and referred to a father only in a derivative sense. Hence the chief god of the Romans was Ju-peter, or Zeus-Peter, the chief and father of the gods of the city, the city itself being a microcosm of the Promethean drive to conquer nature in the name of the human will, which, more specifically, means the will of the elite who have the wherewithal to impose their views on the society at large.

The Peter was also a name given to all phallic symbols, specifically the symbol of the stone pillar, something conspicuous in Peter’s “neo-classical” architectural program, which included many of these pillars in his vulgar neo-classical tastes in his city, as well as the many statues of Roman gods he included as part of this architecture, a symbol of Peter’s own tastes.

The name Petrograd, or St. Petersburg, has an arcane meaning. The temple of Apollo in Turkey is referred to as the “Patara,” and the oracle of Apollo there referred to as the Pataraus. Apollo is the god of science and enlightenment, which provides much light on the purpose of the city and its true meaning in Russian history. But the notion of “bringing civilization” to Old Russia is older even than the temple of Apollo.

Since all the gods of the ancient pagan pantheon were related and in fact, interchangeable, paganism as a system of thought can be traced to Nimrod, the Hunter, himself. The first mention of Peter as a name for the phallic god is in Mesopotamia. In the book of Exodus, Baalam, the chief of the pagans, is referred to as the Pethor of Mesopotamia (Deut. 23:4). He is called this because he “sits on the chair” of Nimrod as a “successor.” Baalam and Nimrod are the same name, meaning “conqueror of a people.” In Greek, the name is Nicklaus. The name of Baalam’s “ecclesiastical center” is the Peter, or the house of the stone phallic pillar, on the Euphrates (cf. The excellent article by Ernst L. Martin, “Simon Peter versus Simon Magus”). Hence, Petrograd, or Peter’s Peter on the Neva. The agenda was identical: social control, regimentation and “rationalization.” Nimrod himself was said to have brought reason and proper government to his people very soon after the flood waters had abated. Pushkin seems also to have made this connection in an arcane sense in his “Bronze Horseman.”

Yet, Apollo too, was a hunter, and yet another example of the identical phenomenon: civilization as crashing upon a formerly free, communal, mobile and god-fearing people. Hugh Nibley, in his excellent, “The Hierocentric State” writes, “This is the old story of Nimrod, who revolted against God, ‘and became a hunter of men’ who founded that abominable state from which all kings of the earth take their authority. Even Apollo was in the beginning a deadly hunter who came from the steppes of Asia and slew the great serpent that guarded the holy spring of Delphi, so that he could gain control of the spot to which all Greeks brought their tribute, and thereby become their ruler.”

Janus, mentioned already, is yet another manifestation of this same mentality, manifest identically from Prometheus, Tammuz, Nimrod and Apollo, the god of civilization and

“Enlightenment.” The technology that will create a “deified humanity” completely triumphant over material nature is the nature of this “Enlightenment.” Janus, according to Plutarch, was the first to bring civilization to earth after the flood, build cities, and introduced the “life of reason” to “savage humanity.” After his death and subsequent deification, he was referred to as Pator. He is the father of the Babylonian, banking- based system of rule specifically, and of paganism in general. But Janus has two other attributes that place him close to Peter the Great. Firstly, he has control over the calendar, as Peter changed the calendar later, from the ancient calculation of the age of the earth to one based on western models, based on the birth of Christ. According to Ovid, Janus/Pator also held “the keys” to heaven and earth, and was lord over both, just as Peter sought to secularize the church, making himself lord of the sacraments as well as politics. He was the “keeper of the keys” into the pagan promised land, that of a completely automated and “rationalized” society.

It seems clear, from Nimrod to Xerxes to Solomon to Peter, that centralization is the promotion of the Will, whether that of an initiated monarch, or that of the techno-elite in modern America, over that of Divinity, and man’s relationship to him and his Creation. Hence, the most strict of the Orthodox tradition, the hesychasts, Old Ritualists, skete dwellers, Irish Culdees, the Northern Hermits of Russia, and many others, all demand local control, local communalism and the worship of the tiny community or skete. Centralization means mechanization, bureaucratization and rule of law rather than the Rule of Law; it is the rule of man, and hence, that of money, man’s great motivator according to modern, western ideology. In his excellent history of the Old Testament, Bernhard Anderson writes of the ancient Israelite organization prior to Solomon: “The twelve tribes were bound together not by a centralized government, but by a common devotion to Yahweh, the God of the Covenant, and by common religious and legal responsibilities. The Confederacy by its very nature encouraged a high degree of tribal independence. God alone was ruler of the Israelite tribes.”

In the Old Testament, this rebellion against Solomon and his apostate successors was found in the smaller sects of the desert openly praised by the prophets and later church fathers. The Rechabites refused to accept the innovations of the centralizers and syncretists of the House of Achab (cf. Jer. 35), and hence became communalists of the desert, living the wilderness ideal, as many hermits in the Christian era imitated. The Rechabite connection to later “desert-skete” movements has not, to my knowledge ever been studied, yet the connection is glaring, particularly in the writings of St. John Cassian. The Rechabites were a reaction to Canaanite “civilization” and its obsession with honors, centralization and technology, synthesized in human sacrifice to the various Baals in exchange for worldly success. Their ritual was strictly Yahwehist, with little by way of ornamentation and pomp.

They refused to drink alcohol, which they correctly associated with decadence and the worship of wealth, power and the leisure it afforded. They connected civilization with all the vices the Covenant Community (which Orthodoxy is the sole and only descendant) were required to condemn and violently destroy, the very vices of Nimrod, having found their expression at the time in Tyre and other pagan civilizations of Canaan. The Rechabites are mentioned by St. John Chrysostom (Ep. 52-3) very favorably, and it has been said that when the Jews were stoning the Apostles, specifically James, the Rechabites attempted to intervene and stop the execution.

The Rechabite/skete ideal is connected both with the positive affirmation of the non-civilizational desert ideal which all Orthodox are required to imitate according to their strength, as well as the negative reaction to centralization and civilization, which, by its very nature, create

classes, one-dimensional men, and bureaucracy, leading in turn, to a group of parasitical elements in society such as bankers and lawyers, who manipulate the culture for their own ends. Centralization is pagan at its core, in that it requires continual human sacrifice in terms of warfare and the continuing building of cities and dams, as well as high taxes and the rapacious nature of the wealthy classes who depend on the structured existence of the city for their power. St. John Chrysostom's high regard for the Rechabites is immediately connected to his contempt for the Byzantine/Greek upper classes and the (pagan) system they had erected to promote and protect their agenda.

Following the tradition of the Old Testament, the Orthodox reaction to centralization and civilization is to reject the strictures of power that permit a tiny, billionaire elite to create, control and administer the "culture" of the modern west. Anyone who attempts to criticize the monstrous nature of western culture while refusing (often out of fear) to deal with those who control it end up as sterile, cliché-ridden rants against "porn" or "bad manners." All those who are part of SCOBA, the Phanar-based liberal and ecumenist movement in Orthodoxy demand strict "obedience" to their bishops and the erection of a wealthy, centralized structure of "seminaries" and programs to more easily facilitate liberal control and the creation of non-spiritual "priests" who thus oversee the hierarchical control over religious life at the local level.

The fact that the OCA was financed by the YMCA in Geneva and the Archer-Daniels-Midland Corporation of Kansas City (which finances and partially controls the World and National Council of Churches, along with the Rockefeller Foundation and the various fronts for Sorosian interests) underscore the dependence of ecumenism on corporate capital and the structures of bogus legality to protect their interests.

There is an immediate connection between the ideology of Nimrod, manifest in both Tyre and Solomon's peculiar brand of ecumenism, and the modern pantheon of "celebrities" so vigorously promoted by the wealthy, who serve to legitimize and mentally institutionalize corporate liberalism among the sheep-like, massified American public. When Metropolitan Phillip of the AOC demands Orthodoxy (or what he imagines Orthodoxy to be) become part of "American life," as he so often intones in the pages of the execrable *Word* magazine, what aspects of American life does he have in mind? Since all American "culture" partakes of the Sorosian corporate liberal and fashion elite, to submerge Orthodoxy into American life is somewhat akin to mixing whiskey and grape juice. He and his ilk desire complete control, hence, he must destroy the monastic and sobornost' idea in Orthodoxy.

Civilization demands mechanization, bureaucratization and a faux-legality which rests on the former, so as to justify and protect the interests of those who have the power to erect and administer such a structure. This is urbanism and the obsession/fetishization with mind/will, which in turn leads to the control over nature of the sort found in the Enlightenment idea of science (both natural and social) leading to complete social regimentation, ironically in the name of freedom and progress. The mind/will mentioned can only be that of a tiny elite, who civilization and the state serve to protect.

When the Regime speaks of individuality and "freedom of choice" the question rests in the reserve of the manipulator. When it is seen in its proper, concrete and contextualized form, one sees that "freedom of choice" only has social and political import when it is that of the wealthy. The poor cannot demand freedom of choice for themselves and reserve it from everyone else. "Freedom," in the vulgar, American, utilitarian sense, can only mean freedom for the wealthy to dominate all else, since the freedom of the poor means little, since they do not have the ability to dominate anything, but only to swim in the fishpond dug by the elite.

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