

tive of mankind, re-establishing harmony between Heaven and Earth.

But this harmony is not imposed by force from without. It is revealed only to those who accept the Sacrifice and victory of Jesus, by those who find in Him "the way, the truth and the life".

Goglotha – the entry of the "God-man" into a tragic, dark world – remains beyond our comprehension. Only love and faith, only the readiness to partake of it with one's whole being can open for us the meaning of this mystery.

Jesus – representing mankind – victorious over evil, over suffering and death, draws after Him those who love Him. His sacrifice, although it was completed once in Jerusalem, is in essence above time, and it is a sign of our discipleship to participate in it.

On the night before the Crucifixion He spoke to his disciples about participating in this eternal Sacrifice.

Disturbed and confused, wavering between hope and fear, they gathered in the house of His unknown follower. And then He took bread. He broke it, gave thanks, and said the mysterious words: "Take, eat: this is my body, which is given for you . . ." He took the cup: "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins: do this in remembrance of me."

Those taking part in the Last Supper shared the Bread and the Wine between them; from this night the Sacrifice of the New Covenant is inseparable from the Church. The cup has been uplifted above the world. The centuries pass away like smoke and behind the transparent shroud is the shining visage of Christ with the Cup. The age-old movement of history has no dominion over Him.

When approaching the Eucharistic meal, those who follow Christ "do shew the Lord's death" – as the apostle Paul said, they become partakers of His Sacrifice. Bread and Wine! Everyday human food . . . Those who shared them amongst themselves were somehow joined in one. Again and again Christ is present at this Last Supper. In the Roman catacombs and in a Medieval cathedral, in the centre of a vast city and in a labour camp of death, amidst the polar silence and on the edge of the desert, this sacrifice somehow embraces our planet, rising with the sun and following it from East to West. The earth continues to turn and there is not an hour when the Cup does not shew forth the saving death of the "God-man".

#### 4. *The meaning of an Icon*

The best icons, although hung mostly in museums, continue to influence and inspire many Soviet citizens. "The claim is made for icons that the experience of an icon is the experience of the Kingdom of Heaven; there is direct involvement with what is portrayed" (*Sobornost*, No. 6, p. 398) and some find faith through them. The theological meaning of Rublev's great icon, the Holy Trinity, was the subject of an article from which we print a small extract.

*The Theological Content of the Icon  
"The Holy Trinity" by Andrei Rublev*  
by Aleksandr Vetelev

(*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, No. 8, 1972, pp. 63-75 and No. 10, 1972, pp. 62-65. The following extract is taken from No. 8, p. 70).

*The Cup*

On the altar stands a small Cup with the sacrificial Lamb. N. A. Demina writes "It has already been observed by the first researchers that the "Trinity" of A. Rublev is given as an image (*obraz*) of the Eucharist"<sup>1</sup>. More exactly "the cup should be seen as an image of the Eucharist"<sup>2</sup>.

But the cup has other symbolic meanings. In Holy Scripture we find "the cup" of suffering and persecution (Matt 20:22-23), "the cup" of sin and injustice (Luke 11:39), "the cup" of Gethsemane's struggle (Mark 14:36) and the agony of Golgotha and, finally, "the cup" of the New Covenant, the Eucharistic cup (Matt. 26:27-28).

Which of all these cups is the subject of the icon? It is natural to think that the subject is the cup which called forth all the other cups – the cup of human sin and injustice, which gave birth also to the cup of Gethsemane and Golgotha and the Eucharistic cup.

This first cup namely left its mark on the angels' faces, having clouded them with sacred grief and compassionate love for the past and present sin of man. If we wished to find the symbolic place for the first cup – for this "abyss of sin" – in the icon of "The Holy Trinity", then the large cup under the altar, clearly painted between the feet of the angels at the side, would appear to be that place and that cup.<sup>3</sup> This shows us more clearly the meaning of the cup with the sacrificial Lamb, which stands on the altar and "has emptied" the vast cup of human sin and misfortune, connected with it.<sup>4</sup> The cup of "The Holy Trinity" symbolizes both "the cup of life", "the cup of wisdom" and the "cup of death" – that is, all the basic moments of life in general and of Russian life in particular . . .

For Andrei Rublev himself and the people of his time, "the cup" of the Trinity had concentrated in it all the deep and burdened feelings, associated with the misfortunes of that time and with the persistent hope for a better future. "In his Trinity" – writes N. A. Demina, – "the cup of death is the promise of future life"<sup>5</sup>.

The icon, "The Holy Trinity", as we see, opens up the hidden depths of life and the mystery of the redemptive Sacrifice of Christ. It describes pictorially for us, that the love of God is a sacrificial, saving love, that there is not and cannot be on earth love of such dimensions, of such universal and eternal meaning as was and is the sacrificial love of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> N. A. Demina "The Trinity" of Andrei Rublev, Moscow, 1963, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> V. N. Lazarev Andrei Rublev, Moscow, 1966, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> M. V. Alpatov Andrei Rublev, Moscow, 1959, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> "If Christ had not drunk the cup containing all the injustices we have committed and all the retribution prepared for us, then this cup would have drowned the whole world, but He alone . . . emptied it." Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow *Slovo v Velikii pyatok*, Vol. I, pp. 32-37.

<sup>5</sup> N. A. Demina "The Trinity" of Andrei Rublev, p. 52.