

Eight million. Like Moscow. And what happened then . . .” he said, more to himself. We both looked into the blood-stained darkness. The vast black sky shimmered with fiery splashes. Below, quite tiny, froze the shadows of the KGB agents on duty.

At the end of March 1971 terrible news flew around all Moscow. One of the most honest and courageous men in the USSR had been arrested – Volodya Bukovsky. Something had to be undertaken urgently in his defence. Anatoli Emmanuilovich wrote a bold article about Volodya. He talked about him with Solzhenitsyn. Meanwhile, the circle around Anatoli Emmanuilovich himself began to close in. The authorities understood that his nine-month stay in prison had not broken the church writer, and prepared a new reprisal. One warm May day he went down from his flat to buy newspapers and did not return. The trial took place on 19 May in Lyublino and Anatoli Emmanuilovich was sentenced to three years in a labour camp.

On 8 June 1973 Anatoli Emmanuilovich was set free. Only God knows what new ordeals fate has prepared for this courageous man. I only know³ that to suppress him is not within the power of any Brezhnev or Andropov, for he is the very conscience and truth of Russia. Surely you cannot suppress conscience and truth?

Passages from Levitin’s Work

The following extract is taken from “My Return” (Grani, No. 79, pp. 47-49). Levitin possesses an inner freedom which imprisonment could not destroy. Despite his physical isolation behind bars he was able to remain in communion with the Church, the world and all men.

The greatest miracle of all is prayer. I have only to turn my thoughts to God and I suddenly feel a strength which bursts into me from somewhere, bursts into my soul, into my entire being. What is it? Psychotherapy? No, it is not psychotherapy, for where would I, an insignificant old man who is tired of life, get this strength which renews me and saves me, lifting me above the earth. It comes from without, and there is no force on earth that can even understand it.

I am not a mystic by nature, nor am I characterized by susceptibility to supernatural phenomena or special experiences. I am susceptible only to that which is accessible to every man: prayer. Since I grew up in the Orthodox Church and was raised by it, my prayer pours forth in Orthodox forms (I do not, of course, deny any other forms).

The basis of my whole spiritual life is the Orthodox liturgy. Therefore, while in prison I attended the liturgy every day in my imagination. At 8 a.m. I would begin walking around my cell, repeating to myself the words of the liturgy. At that moment I felt myself inseparably linked with the whole Christian world. Therefore during my Great Litany I always prayed for the Pope, for the Ecumenical Patriarch and for our own Patriarch Alexi (while he was alive) – then for the patriarchal *locum tenens*. Reaching the central point of the liturgy, I would say to myself the eucharistic canon – and then the words of the transubstantiation, standing before the face of the Lord, sensing almost physically His

wounded and bleeding body. I would begin praying in my own words, and I would remember all those near to me, those in prison and those who were free, those who were alive and those who had died. And my memory would keep suggesting more and more names. I remembered the whole of Russian literature (from Lomonosov to Paustovsky), and all the Russian theatre (from Mochalov to Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Moskvín and Kochalov), and all those who suffered in our land for righteousness' sake (from Radishchev and the Decembrists to Alexi Kosterin), and all the Orthodox hierarchy, and the numerous priestly servants whom I had known from childhood, and my own numerous teachers.

The prison walls moved apart and the whole universe became my residence, visible and invisible, the universe for which that wounded, pierced body offered itself as a sacrifice. Then the Lord's Prayer sounded in my heart especially insistently, as did the prayer before the communion: "I believe Lord and confess". All day after the liturgy I felt an unusual élan of spirit, a clarity and spiritual purity. Not only my prayer, but much more the prayer of many faithful Christians helped me. I felt it continually, it worked from a distance, lifting me up as though on wings, giving me living water and the bread of life, peace of soul, rest and love.

A collection of Levitin's essays, Stromaty (Possev, 1972, pp. 33-36), includes one entitled "On the True Essence of Christianity" from which the following passage is taken.

I have shared my life's experience with the reader. I have summoned him to courage, to courage, and once more to courage. But you know, I am not merely an elderly man who has come close to the limit of life. I am a Christian. At once there arises the question of how compatible these appeals are with Christianity. According to the general opinion, Christianity is meekness, submissiveness, and absorption in oneself. Courage – that is an external action, it is energy taken to its limit, it is self-assertion. So how far can the present writer be considered a Christian? It is particularly strange to hear such appeals from an Orthodox Christian, a son of the Russian Orthodox Church. For here meekness is raised to the level of the greatest Christian virtue. The monks, who created the spiritual environment in which Holy Russia lived through a thousand years, expressed the idea of the primacy of meekness over all other virtues in the chiselled aphorism: "Obedience rather than prayer and fasting." Indeed, it is difficult to imagine St. Seraphim in collaboration with a revolutionary, Theofan the Hermit rubbing shoulders with Herzen, or, say, Ambrose of Optina side by side with Plekhanov. It is not just a matter of differing convictions, but a matter of differing psychological types. The type of the Orthodox Russian man and the type of the Russian revolutionary are poles apart and mutually incompatible. It would be a completely useless waste of time to deny this.

However, Christianity must not be reduced to the Russian Orthodox Church. For the centre of Christianity is Christ. Christ is broader and deeper not only than any national formation of Christianity or individual confession; he is broader than Christianity itself. Christianity is historical, and therefore limited. Christ is outside history, and therefore universal. The purpose of Christianity consists in reflecting the image of Christ over the centuries. But at any given

moment of history Christianity reflects only one of the aspects of the person of the only-begotten Son of God – hence the incompleteness, the insufficiency and the detrimental effect of historical Christianity .

Christianity came to Old Russia from Byzantium, from a Byzantium which was already sinking into decline. This was the Byzantium of the Isaurians, the emperor-iconoclasts, and the villain-monarchs of the type of Constantine Copronymus. This was a Byzantium broken by five hundred years of slavery, impoverished and depraved, like a rusted vessel, which has yet a precious content – Holy Orthodoxy. The Byzantine Church also became badly impoverished at this time. St. John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Gregory the Divine, Theodor the Studite and St. John of Damascus had died long ago. These last religious titans that Byzantium had produced had died three hundred years before this, leaving no heirs. Orthodoxy was brought to Russia by fawning bishops and diplomats. However, Holy Russia accepted Orthodoxy and nurtured an abundant monasticism, which enlightened the land on its emergence from the caves of Kiy.

The Church in Russia always came out as an advocate of a strongly centralized Tsarist power. Was this bad or good? It was good in this early epoch, and historically inevitable, because only monarchical power could have saved Russia from unbridled enslavement by the Tatars. However, the everyday activity of the Church gradually became so entangled with the monarchical regime that it was difficult to make out where the Church ended and where the monarchy began. The Russian Church turned into a State Church, meekness became the fundamental virtue in Russia, and subsequently meekness degenerated into fawning, cowardice and egoism. Of course, all these transitions took place gradually and with time it became an axiom for the Russian people that slavish submissiveness was almost a synonym for Christianity.

Yevgeni Bobkov was expelled from Moscow University in 1959. The authorities had discovered that he was an acolyte at the Rogozhsky Cathedral where the Old Believers worship. On 11 April, 1959 he was attacked in an article, entitled "The Chameleon", which appeared in Moskovsky Komsomolets. In reaction to this attack Levitin wrote "On Two Humorous Articles and One Very Serious Matter" (published in Dialog s Tserkovnoi Rossiei, Paris, 1967, pp. 26-28) from which the following passage is taken.

I am a believing Christian, a religious man. For me there is one thing in life which is greater than any other – the rights of man surpass all else, in my view. Any kind of doctrine of discrimination, be it racial, national or religious, is irresistibly distasteful to me. If atheists were somewhere to suffer persecution on account of their convictions, I should defend them as best I could. But now it is a call to drive believers from higher education that I hear – and I intend to enter the fray against the advocates of religious discrimination with all the means at my disposal . . .

Let me ask this: what would happen if . . . we were to bar believers from higher education? The country would be deprived of hundreds of able doctors, engineers and scientific workers. But this is not the worst. A large group of oppressed and frustrated, fanatically antagonistic people would be created, like the English Catholics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries or the Old

Believers and sectarians of Tsarist Russia. A vast number of true chameleons would appear who concealed their real convictions behind a façade. But even this would not be the worst. Worse would be the chain reaction which would set in, not only in the realm of physics, but in that of human society. As the experience of recent years has shown, when arbitrary lawlessness sets in nobody can say where it will lead. Advocating religious discrimination is a blatant call to the violation of the Constitution and the flouting of all legal standards.

October 1959.

Solzhenitsyn's Prayer

How easy it is for me to live with you, Lord!
How easy it is for me to believe in You!
When my mind is distraught
and my reason fails,
when the cleverest people do not see further
than this evening and do not know
what must be done tomorrow –
You grant me the clear confidence,
that You exist, and that You will take care
that not all the ways of goodness are stopped.

At the height of earthly fame I gaze
with wonder at that path
through hopelessness –
to this point, from which even I have been able to convey
to men some reflection of the light which comes from You.

And you will enable me to go on doing
as much as needs to be done.
And in so far as I do not manage it –
that means that You have allotted the task to others.