

Traditions of Lay Orthodoxy in the Russian North

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History books and political propaganda have taught us to think about Russian culture in geographical terms, as something that is an integrated whole. Political development over the past few years under the banner of 'federalism' has led to a number of political and economic declarations about the diversity of the regions, but behind all these declarations there are short-term economic interests connected with the availability or absence of resources, the varying depth of the economic crisis and the level of political ambition of regional politicians. More often than not we remain unaware of the fundamental diversity of historical background and of the resulting diversity of culture, mentality, religiosity and socio-political orientation.

Despite this, and even given the unitary and centralised nature of Muscovite power, the historical memory of Tver', Saratov, Vladivostok or the North-West varies considerably. Holy Rus', on whose land walked hundreds of heroes of the faith, where to this day every little town has its ancient churches, where great icon-painters laboured, where our ancient history took place, where the Russian people suffered from the Tatar yoke and lived through the Times of Troubles of the seventeenth century, is but a relatively small part of our homeland. A slightly bigger area is formed by the territory where there were aristocratic estates (some of which survive to this day in continued decline), which were the hearth of classical Russian culture of the nineteenth century. The history of the Volga region since its settlement by Russians is no older than that of Massachusetts and for the Pacific Maritime region the antiquity of Virginia could be an object of enormous envy.

However, the uniform, monolithic, universally acknowledged version of Russian history, culture and religiosity has primarily Muscovite features, plus features of central Russia, which was the heart of 'Holy Rus'' and was part of Muscovy from ancient times. All the lands acquired by the Muscovite state were supposed to receive ideology along with the system of government. Even the local inhabitants were often not fully aware of the ideological diversity of these lands. Over the years some of the historic features of the regions were lost or uprooted (especially under the Bolsheviks). Where there were gigantic construction projects to which vast numbers of people moved and where the map was peppered with islands of the Gulag and where the rule of the NKVD was the basic form of local government, it was virtually impossible for any kind of historic roots to be preserved. On the other hand there were regions that largely escaped the traumas of the Soviet era. We can speculatively note historic features of the regions which no longer play any role in real life today; on the other hand we may fail to notice, or write off as insignificant, something which was formative for the present reality of some part of our country.

The history of the Russian North is also the history of Holy Rus'. However, the culture of this vast region is not usually taken into account when describing Holy Rus'. The norms of state and church life in central Russia are taken as the standard, where the model is the concordance of Church and State and of Patriarch and Orthodox Tsar and where St Sergi of Radonezh, who blessed the forces of Prince Dmitri Donskoy in the defence of the motherland, is held up as an example of holiness. It was under the influence of Moscow that Novgorod began to revere Prince Aleksandr Nevsky, whom the people of Novgorod had at one time removed from his throne, instead of the legendary Marfa Boretskaya, elected as leader by the very same people of Novgorod to defend the freedom of Novgorod the Great against Muscovite expansion. Despite the pressures of central authority, for many centuries the North preserved its special features and remained a Holy Rus' that was built on different traditions from those of the Muscovite empire.

From the Middle Ages a democratic spirit in public life and traditions of local self-government were characteristic of the North. They favourably distinguished it from the central regions of Russia and continue to do so. In religious life this feature could be seen in the broad autonomy of the parish and the role of the laity in church administration as a whole. For several centuries up to the eighteenth century the northern Russian parish possessed broad autonomy. Geography helped: the threads linking the parishes with the centres of the Church were almost imperceptible. Another cause of this autonomy was social. In most of the European North of Russia the peasants were not the property of feudal landlords. They had evolved a system of local village self-government and many of its traditions were carried over into parish life. The village assembly, the general meeting of heads of families, had wide-ranging decision-making and supervisory rights in the parish. It elected or appointed the clergy, elected the churchwarden, directly administered church property, including land (for example, it set the conditions for renting out church land) and controlled church finances. The village (all the members of the assembly) *de facto* supervised the clergy. The churchwarden also had wide-ranging powers. He was responsible for the parish purse and represented the church in dealings with the state and local government bodies.¹ The dispersal of the population over a huge territory also contributed to the freedom of the laity – the inhabitants of most villages received their spiritual food from a priest who came only occasionally from the main village to hold services in the local chapel. Furthermore, in the Russian North part of the population was totally different from that of any other region – the Pomory, who had the strongest northern self-awareness.

In the Synodal period from the early eighteenth century the autonomy of the parish was replaced by a bureaucratic system of government, but the northerners did not forget their history. The significant role of the laity in the life of the Church that was traditional for the Russian North began to be revived before the Revolution. At that time most parishes began to set up church trusteeships.

Before the Revolution the level of literacy of the inhabitants of the North was much higher than the average for Russia. In the harsh natural conditions of the North over the centuries local inhabitants had developed a special sense of responsibility for their families, themselves and the fruits of their labour. The features of life of the free peasantry and the conditions of the fishing industry, long absences at sea and also the presence of the largest centres of monastic life in Russia all contributed to a specific religious feeling among the northerners, in which a practical approach and contemplation were harmoniously combined.

Undoubtedly the development of a deep religious feeling was largely thanks to the

northern monasteries. It was the monastic communities which nurtured a multitude of holy ascetics and from the beginning played a role as centres of enlightenment and religious education. The absence of large towns and the insignificant numbers of nobility meant that rich authoritative monasteries, populated by scholarly monastics famous for their ascetic lifestyle, were for hundreds of years up to the eighteenth century the main centres of education, culture, medicine and social service. The Solovetsky Monastery and the ancient Valaam Monastery, established in the thirteenth century, played a large role in the christianisation of the population of the North. The secluded lifestyle was alien to almost all the monasteries of Northern Russia: they always tried to look beyond their walls and share their spiritual riches with the secular world.

Relations with the western world were also founded on openness, especially since contacts with the West had been the norm for the North since earliest times. Knowledge of European customs and social intercourse with Europeans almost inevitably sustained democratic traditions and even to a degree formed the basis for their existence. Since ancient times the proximity of the North to Scandinavia has played a large role in spiritual life, and Finnish and to a lesser extent Swedish influence has always been an important factor.

One of the natural consequences of the cooperation of the northerners with their foreign partners was toleration of other confessions. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries English and Dutch, and later Swedish and German, congregations were established in the northern ports. From 1553 English merchants held services on boats and in buildings belonging to the English trading company. In 1649 an Evangelical-Reformed parish and school were established and in 1660 a permanent Reformed pastor arrived in Arkhangel'sk. In 1674 a Calvinist chapel was built to which pastors came from time to time. In 1686 a German Lutheran parish was established in Arkhangel'sk and began building a church, while in Karelia, Lutherans from Finland, which became part of Russia in 1809, had been establishing themselves since the time of Peter the Great. From the nineteenth century Catholic parishes began to appear, consisting mostly of Poles.² The state, which was intolerant of foreign confessions in most of the country, did everything to encourage religious toleration in the northern regions that had links with foreigners. After the death of Bishop Afanasi of Kholmogorsk, Peter the Great described the essence of religious policy in the region: 'The Kholmogorsk diocese is an important sea-port, where there are many foreigners from abroad, with whom the bishop was able to deal in a worthy and proper manner to the honour and glory of the Russian State.' The presence of foreign confessions in the North was accepted and nobody saw in them any threat to Russian self-awareness. Indeed, on the contrary, the foreigners were respected and people tried to make use of the fruits of their culture.

As well as a tolerant attitude to various confessions, one should also note an equally favourable attitude towards other nations, not necessarily from abroad. First of all there were the native peoples of the Russian North, the Karelians, Veps, Komi and their near neighbours the Finns. The Karelians, for example, were baptised almost a thousand years ago along with Rus'. This people fairly rapidly adopted Orthodoxy as its religion. The Veps, the second native people of Karelia, accepted Orthodoxy along with the Karelians. The Komi or Zyryan nation was baptised much later. The Komi have their patron saint, St Stefan of Perm', a disciple of St Sergi of Radonezh who created an alphabet for the Komi and converted them to Orthodoxy. Some bishops of the northern dioceses actively preached to the Finnish population of the North of Russia and in Finland itself. At the beginning of the twentieth century

the work of converting the native peoples to Orthodoxy and the translation of services into their languages was intensified. Regular missionary conferences were held at which decisions were made on translating the Gospels and service books. The church authorities usually did not exclude the native peoples of the North from Orthodoxy and the Church and recognised their national distinctiveness in church life, which, of course, further contributed to the gentle, tolerant atmosphere in the dioceses.

It is quite understandable that it was here among the local population that the Old Believer or Old Ritualist movement took root. This movement was primarily a protest against bureaucratic government and against the suppression of dissent by the state, and a striving for freedom from the pressures of harsh centralised authority. In the seventeenth century and in the times after Nikon's reforms this sparsely populated and inaccessible part of Russia became one of the regions to which adherents of the old faith flocked from all over the country. Here they could enjoy peace and quiet. The so-called Vygoretsky Monastery, combining the Danilovsky and Leksinsky Hermitages (now in Medvezh'yegorsk *raion*, near the town of Povenets), became one of the main centres, indeed the cradle, of the priestless Old Believer movement. One of the main centres of the Pomor'ye Old Believers is still in Ust'-Tsil'ma in the Komi Republic.

The historic distinctiveness of the religious life of the North is closely connected with Novgorod. Although Novgorod itself, because of geographical and socio-economic factors, cannot be considered fully part of the Russian North, its democratic traditions and close links with the West were combined fortuitously with specifically northern traditions. Traditions were formed in Novgorod which were far more ancient than Muscovite ones, and they had an influence on Northern Rus' long before its incorporation in the centralised Muscovite state. Novgorod is inseparably linked with the whole Russian North and its influence also extended to the neighbouring northern dioceses which were subsequently established. It was here that the democratic traditions of the North were for a certain period realised in practice and, despite the establishment of serfdom under Muscovite rule, memory of Novgorod's freedoms was still preserved. These freedoms consisted of democratic traditions of city and local self-government. One of its practices, unique in Rus', was to decide city matters at the popular *veche* (assembly) made up of the adult population of the city. The right to elect the metropolitan was also unique and is unparalleled in Russian history.

All these arrangements ceased after the abolition of Novgorod's freedoms in 1477; however, even in the centralised Muscovite state the bishops of Novgorod enjoyed one of the positions of greatest honour, being granted the then rare title of metropolitan in 1589. Novgorod had primarily symbolic importance as a town rich in its ancient ecclesiastical traditions and as one of the most ancient Russian episcopal sees.

From the eighteenth century there grew up in Novgorod a renewed interest in ancient culture and history and naturally the freedom-loving spirit of the people once more rose to the surface, along with the memory that at one time they had decided everything for themselves. This process began when not far from Novgorod St Petersburg was founded as Russia's second capital. The church and cultural life of Novgorod, the clergy and the intelligentsia, began to be affected more and more by the enlightened Synodal clergy and the intelligentsia educated in the capital. St Petersburg now had the largest seminary and theological academy in Russia. In the nineteenth century the standards in Novgorod's seminary, founded in 1740, were

among the highest in Russia. Under Peter the Great traditions of social service were laid in Novgorod. On the initiative of Metropolitan Iov of Novgorod the first refuge for abandoned children was founded. In the nineteenth century the diocese actively supported work among the poor and needy.

The Soviet period brought far greater devastation to the Russian North than to the regions of central Russia. After the civil war, apart from everything else, the North became the main region of concentration camps, prisons and places of exile. The influence of the NKVD was felt especially in the Komi Republic and in Arkhangel'sk *oblast'*. By 1923 practically all the monasteries had been closed and by the end of the 1920s church life had been completely fragmented. As a result, in the early 1930s atheist repressive measures were able to destroy almost all organised Orthodox, Old Believer and Lutheran church life. In Karelia, for example, at the start of *perestroika* only five Orthodox parishes remained and all church books in the Karelian language had been destroyed – not even a single photocopy remained anywhere in the USSR. In Arkhangel'sk all monuments of church architecture were completely destroyed (of ancient Russian cities Arkhangel'sk was the only one that suffered this fate). From the 1930s to the end of the 1980s there were fewer than 20 churches in Novgorod diocese and most of what was confiscated during the Soviet period was returned only at the beginning of the 1990s. Soviet rule turned Novgorod diocese from the most prestigious to the poorest. During the Second World War the Germans did not hold the Novgorod area for long and therefore there was no mass reopening of churches such as took place in the Pskov area. Novgorod diocese was extremely poor, with extremely few parishes, and therefore in 1965 Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) absorbed it into Leningrad diocese. As a result church life was somewhat revitalised and foreign religious delegations were often sent to the area by Metropolitan Nikodim.

The hardships and deprivations of the communist regime did not succeed, however, in destroying the traditional distinctiveness of the Russian North in the memory of the people.

In the early 1990s a restoration of the dioceses took place. Under the communists only Arkhangel'sk diocese had survived. Episcopal sees were reestablished in Novgorod, Petrozavodsk and Syktyvkar (Komi Republic). Apart from these dioceses, geographically the European North also includes Murmansk *oblast'* and Vologda *oblast'*. Murmansk is the most distant and northerly diocese where religious life is still rather stagnant, and in Vologda *oblast'* the 'northern distinctiveness' is not readily evident in church life. For our purposes the most important examples of the revival of church life are in Karelia, the Komi Republic, Novgorod and Arkhangel'sk.

When a certain democratisation of the Church set in during *perestroika* the laity in the Russian North, more so than in other dioceses, began to play an active and sometimes decisive role in the organisation of church life.

The social projects of the Church, based on lay initiatives, are prominent features in the northern Russian dioceses. Probably nowhere else in Russia are entrepreneurs as willing to give financial support to the Church and to help the needy, and social initiatives thus find the necessary sponsorship. In Petrozavodsk, for example, the basic financial source for the work of the *Zhuravka* religious and educational centre is sponsorship by a building firm which belongs to the director of the centre, Yevgeni Kuz'kin. The Children's Aid Foundation, which enjoys wide support from entrepreneurs, and the Medicines for Children programme were organised in Arkhangel'sk by Orthodox businessman Dmitri Zenchenko. In Syktyvkar the head of the

Brotherhood of Stefan and Prokopi, the gifted and energetic Yuri Yekishev, a mathematician by training who has a passion for literature, has done a great deal for the revival of Komi national Orthodoxy and the Scout movement.

In Novgorod, Arkhangel'sk, Petrozavodsk and Syktyvkar one cannot fail to notice a rare phenomenon in the Orthodox Church in Russia: cooperation with the intelligentsia, university teachers, writers, artists and museum staff and widespread involvement of teachers in the work of Sunday schools. The atmosphere in these regions, where culture and education have always enjoyed pride of place, and also the attitude of the diocesan leadership help to reduce the barrier between the intelligentsia and the Church. A particular feature of Christian education in the northern Russian dioceses is its close relationship with the world of the universities, with secular education and with Orthodox lay initiatives. Working together with people with a secular education creates a special type of Christian education that is based on openness to all kinds of ideas and on liberalism and is oriented to cooperation with the West and to comparison with European values.

One of the most striking examples is the *Zhuravka* centre in Petrozavodsk where the development of diocesan religious education is the priority. The centre runs three-year courses for catechists; some of the graduates have become priests. These courses are taught by Bishop Manuil, by the best-educated priests and by teachers at secular higher educational institutions in Petrozavodsk. The *Zhuravka* centre was founded by entrepreneur Yevgeni Kuz'kin, who is the director and himself selects the teaching staff.

The intelligentsia usually generates ideas and proposes projects. In Arkhangel'sk the department of culturology and religious studies of the University of the Pomor'ye is especially active. It is run by Nikolai Terebikhin who has been involved in the development of a special 'Pomor'ye mentality' comprising free-thinking, mysticism, humility, pluralism and orientation to the West. Occasionally proposals are put forward to turn the department into a theological faculty.

Thinking at the Centre of Christian Culture is along the same lines. Here the leading light is university professor Yevgeni Arinin. The Centre aims to combat 'mass culture, materialism and occultism' and also 'sectarian attitudes in the Russian Orthodox Church and other confessions'. It organises cultural and educational programmes featuring 'universal Christian values' and hopes to attract 'liberal Orthodox and liberal Protestants'.

Two professors at the philology faculty of the University of Karelia are prominent in the development of religious education in Karelia. Vladimir Zakharov, head of the department of Russian literature, and Tat'yana Mal'chukova, head of the department of classical philology, have brought together a group to teach a broad course of church disciplines. At the suggestion of bishop Manuil, and with the active support of the diocese, the leadership of the faculty and the rector's office of the university plan to develop this group into a theological department at the philology faculty by the year 2000. Professor Zakharov is a leading specialist on Dostoyevsky and a vice-president of the International Dostoyevsky Society. He came to faith as an Orthodox Christian through reading Dostoyevsky. Zakharov is one of the growing number of Christian scholars of Russian culture and literature from the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. He has planned and edited anthologies of Biblical themes in the works of Russian writers.³

Staraya Russa, the second most important religious centre in Novgorod diocese, provides an example of close and friendly relations between the Church and museum staff. This is largely thanks to the attitude of the staff of the Staraya Russa Dostoy-

evsky museum and especially the director Vera Bogdanova. Attached to the museum are a school of Orthodox Christian culture, a branch of the Novgorod courses for catechists, a Sunday School and a children's summer camp. The dean of the Cathedral of the Resurrection, Fr Sergi, plays an active part in all this, and the authorities support it. The museum's annual Dostoyevsky readings have become a church event in Staraya Russa.

The bishops themselves offer patronage to the secular intelligentsia. In Syktyvkar Bishop Pitirim has established close contacts with the republic's Academy of Sciences and with artistic societies. The republic's only 'heavy' literary journal, *Art* (sic), is published with the blessing of Pitirim and with the active participation of the clergy of the diocese who contribute to it. In Novgorod diocese, Archbishop Lev is the editor-in-chief of the regional studies journal *Sofiya*, and the publishing editor is the St Petersburg art expert Nina Zherve. The St Petersburg intelligentsia is prominently represented in the journal, although there are also writers from Novgorod.

Educational and social projects are also supported in the monasteries of the North. Even though the monasteries have not yet recovered from the destruction of the Soviet period they are again trying to take up their historic educational and charitable role. They are not inward-looking, but are actively trying to raise the level of Orthodox Christianity in the dioceses through their educational and social projects. In Novgorod *oblast'* the most important are the men's Yur'yev Monastery and the women's Vaarlamov-Khutinsky Convent of the Transfiguration, whose abbess is sister Aleksiya (Simdyankina) and which is under the patronage of Archbishop Lev. In Karelia the Muromsky Monastery and in Arkhangel'sk the Antoniyevo-Siiskoye Monastery play similar roles. In some places new monasteries are being established and this is happening on the initiative of laypeople. In Syktyvkar the Orthodox activist Yuri Yekishev and his father have built two wooden churches, one of which will be the nucleus of a new Komi monastery.

At the Yur'yev Monastery there is an active and growing programme of summer camps for children from orphanages in St Petersburg and Novgorod. Abbot Afanasi (Pimenov), who has a higher degree in law, is reviving the Muromsky Monastery of the Dormition as a pilgrimage centre and is working with deprived children from the diocese. The Muromsky Monastery has become an important centre of Christian education in the diocese. The Antoniyevo-Siiskoye Monastery near Arkhangel'sk is experiencing a renaissance and its influence is growing under the leadership of Abbot Trifon (Plotnikov) who is exceptionally energetic and open to new ideas. He is extremely popular in Arkhangel'sk and is supported by the authorities and the business community. He is directing a number of academic and educational projects; he appears regularly in the media and is spiritual patron of several charitable initiatives. Abbot Trifon is a native of the North and the Pomory think of him as one of their own, which adds to his popularity.

Meanwhile all the northern dioceses to some degree retain the North's traditional links with the West. The Komi Republic is the least open to western influences since it is a long way from the Russian border. But Novgorod, Arkhangel'sk and Petrozavodsk maintain regular commercial and cultural contacts with European countries, just as they used to centuries ago. The example of Karelia and Finland is particularly striking; the relationship bears fruit in all spheres of life. Finnish believers and the Finnish government assist not only Lutherans, Baptists and Pentecostals but also the Orthodox diocese of Karelia. Finnish Lutherans and Baptists have set up projects to translate the Scriptures into the languages of the peoples of Karelia, and are support-

ing them financially. An Orthodox church in Kalevala was built with the help of money from the Finnish Orthodox Church. The Church also receives humanitarian and financial aid from Finland. The Arkhangel'sk diocese cooperates with Norway in the programme Interchurch Cooperation in the Barents Region (*Mezhtserkovnoye sotrudnichestvo v Barentsevom raione*).

Like all bishops of the Orthodox Church, the bishops of the northern Russian dioceses are appointed by the Synod and not elected by the parishioners in the dioceses. So the appointments are somewhat of a lottery; but the North has been lucky with its bishops, as each of them has qualities suited to the northern mentality. The bishops of these regions have to a large extent shaped the clergy of their dioceses, and because of the lack of priests they have recruited many new ones from the St Petersburg intelligentsia. This has undoubtedly created a good atmosphere in the dioceses. Secular intellectuals are attracted by these well-educated priests, usually with secular higher education, who consider it important to establish lively parishes and united and cohesive church communities and to run Sunday Schools and other more informal parish activities such as children's summer camps. Many priests give lectures in local universities and other higher educational institutions and are happy to meet the press; their openness attracts the intelligentsia to the Church.

Fr Aleksandr Ranne has been the effective organiser and spiritual guide of several initiatives in Novgorod. He is the spiritual leader of the Orthodox-inclined school of Ss Cyril and Methodius and the youth society of St Antoni the Roman (Antoni Rimlyanin, the first Novgorod saint). On his initiative there are regular catechists' courses and informal meetings for the intelligentsia with local priests in Novgorod and he organises an annual course of lectures by teachers of the St Petersburg Theological Academy. Apart from contact with students in the society of St Antoni, Fr Aleksandr gives lectures on Christian psychology in the school of Ss Cyril and Methodius and another school in Novgorod.

Fr Nikolai Ozolin of the Church of the Transfiguration takes a leading role in educational work in the Petrozavodsk diocese. He has organised a large congregation in the village of Kizhsky Pogost, works on church education projects together with the Kizhi museum and cooperates with the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need. Fr Aleksandr Kovalev has established an Orthodox grammar school in Arkhangel'sk. In Soviet times he was expelled in his fourth year from the University of the Pomor'ye for his faith in God, then he became the saxophonist in a rock group and took part in the democratic movement during *perestroika*. Fr Aleksandr is usually the priest invited to give lectures at the University and other higher educational institutions and cultural societies in Arkhangel'sk.

The church authorities do not stand aloof from the problems of the diocese and the region, or the projects of the intelligentsia and the clergy; on the contrary, they are centrally involved.

The head of the Arkhangel'sk diocese, Bishop Tikhon, respects the convictions of the local clergy and supports their initiatives – even those of the most liberal priests. At a diocesan gathering he persuaded one of them, Fr Ioann Privalov, a supporter of the Moscow priest Fr Georgi Kochketkov and a graduate of the St Filaret School in Moscow, to abandon for the time being his plan to translate the services into Russian, but at the same time he continues to support Fr Privalov's educational and charitable programmes.

The head of the Syktyvkar diocese, Bishop Pitirim (Volochkov), is primarily concerned with building new churches and developing monasticism, but he is also heavily involved with social action and has given his blessing to numerous ventures

including one of the most highly developed Scout movements in Russia and various Orthodox youth and women's movements and intelligentsia initiatives. Bishop Pitirim supports the development of the national religious life of the Komi people in the diocese. He himself sometimes uses the Komi language in services and has given his blessing to the republication of the prerevolutionary translation of the liturgy. There is now a church in Syktyvkar where services are held in Komi.

Archbishop Lev leads the Novgorod diocese in the spirit of the 'Novgorod tradition' and has a tolerant attitude to all trends in church life. When the diocese was reestablished he invited in educated and liberal priests from St Petersburg. He came out as a staunch anticommunist: during the putsch of 1991 he organised a prayer meeting before the icon of the Sign of the Mother in God in the Novgorod Kremlin where huge crowds prayed for the country to be spared from the danger of a return to atheist rule. His liberalism extends to interreligious contacts. In June 1996 he was present at the opening of the Catholic Church of Ss Peter and Paul in Novgorod and the Catholic priest regularly seeks his advice on parish problems. Archbishop Lev attaches considerable importance to the cultural treasures of the diocese and has set up the official post of diocesan art historian and curator of the cathedral, currently occupied by one Alisa Pashina. Priorities in this diocese include cooperation with the university, the development of the Orthodox student movement, an active social work programme and the organisation of parish Sunday Schools and libraries.

Bishop Manuil of Petrozavodsk comes from a St Petersburg intelligentsia background. While he was an archimandrite and dean in Karelia he maintained relations with the Lutherans and the Pentecostals. He has great respect for Lutheran tradition and is friendly with Lutheran clergy in Karelia and Scandinavia. Manuil is opposed in principle to discrimination against religious minorities. He is liberal in his views and a moderate ecumenist. He is understanding of the national problems of the Karelians and Veps and considers it a priority to train priests from these peoples. He has given his blessing to the distribution in Karelia of the New Testament translated into Karelian by Finnish Pentecostals. The bishop's plans for work with the native peoples have been implemented in the town of Olonets where the Karelian priest Fr Viktor Kolesnikov has begun work among the Karelian people. Since 1997 Fr Andrei Mazayev of the St Nicholas Church in the village of Ladva has been making regular missionary journeys to Veps villages and building chapels there.

In the liberal atmosphere of the North there are also conservative and nationalist Orthodox circles condemning the bishops for excessive 'liberalism'. The centre of opposition to Archbishop Lev is the Convent of St Nicholas in Vyazhishchi led by Abbess Antoniya (Korneyeva), which is directly subordinate to the patriarch. The supporters of the abbess distribute leaflets criticising the archbishop in the churches and monasteries of the diocese. The abbess herself organises letters of complaint and is constantly sending them to the patriarch and the Holy Synod, along with busloads of protesters. The ultranationalist press of Moscow and St Petersburg publishes 'exposés' and openly slanderous articles inspired by Antoniya. In 1995, disgusted at what the abbess was doing, most of the nuns left the convent with Mother Aleksiya (Simdyankina) and formed the nucleus of the revived Varlaamo-Khutynsky Convent.

As a liberal, Bishop Manuil of Petrozavodsk as a matter of principle does not oppose conservative nationalist groups in the diocese, believing that 'there is room for everybody in the Church'. The most prominent opponent of religious minorities and of 'Finnish expansion' in Karelia is Ol'ga Sedlovskaya, who, paradoxically, is the diocesan press secretary and regularly publishes nationalist articles that

completely contradict the public pronouncements of the bishop.

In Arkhangel'sk fundamentally antidemocratic and ultranationalist views clothed in Orthodox rhetoric are expressed by the Union of the Archangel Michael led by V. Ukhin, a deputy of the Legislative Assembly of Arkhangel'sk *oblast'* and a major businessman. However, the Union is not in open conflict with the diocese.

In the North as a whole an atmosphere of religious tolerance towards all kinds of ideological positions is typical. This can be explained by the healthy relationship between the Church and the secular authorities: the bishops do not demand that the governors suppress religious minorities or allocate huge funds to the dioceses, but rather seek the moral support of the authorities both in the governor's office and at local level. The Communist Party has no serious support in the northern regions and practically no influence. With the exception of the Komi Republic, all the governors of the northern regions belong to various democratic groupings. Apart from Komi president Spiridonov, they are all Orthodox or sympathetic to Orthodoxy and support the Church. Nevertheless, unlike the situation in many other regions, the dioceses do not receive major financial subsidies, and money from the federal budget is allocated only for the restoration of architectural monuments. Only in the Komi Republic are the authorities financing the construction of a new cathedral, in Syktyvkar. The governors themselves do not try to suppress non-Orthodox denominations.

In Arkhangel'sk Bishop Tikhon supports in various ways almost all the initiatives of the authorities. In the 1996 elections he vigorously supported governor Yefremov. Some believers and members of the Arkhangel'sk intelligentsia are critical of this policy. The bishop retorts that the authorities in Arkhangel'sk are 'almost all Orthodox, from governor Anatoli Yefremov down to the heads of the district administrations'. By 1997 all surviving church buildings claimed by the diocese had been returned. The official responsible for religious policy in the regional administration, Anatoli Glushchenko, affirms that 'there are no harmful sects in Arkhangel'sk region, so we don't have to wage a campaign against them'. In accordance with this policy representatives of the Lutherans, Catholics, Baptists and Pentecostals were invited to join the committee for the celebration of 2000 years of Christianity alongside the Orthodox. Bishop Tikhon's policy is based on his view that his prime task is to establish close links with the political and business elite of the region. Following the same policy as the authorities, the bishop shows tolerance to religious minorities and sees no need to establish any antisectarian organisations within the diocese.

The bishop of Syktyvkar, Pitirim, like his colleague Tikhon in Arkhangel'sk, is a convinced anticommunist and frequently affirms this in public. Nevertheless he has managed to establish close working relations with the president of the republic, Yuri Spiridonov, who before *perestroika* was the first secretary of the Komi *obkom*, and Spiridonov even lobbied for him to be appointed bishop. In the mid-1990s Spiridonov began to evolve his own religious policy, which consists of comprehensive support for Orthodoxy. In 1996 the authorities initiated the construction of the St Stefan's Cathedral and set up the Republic Charitable Foundation of St Stefan of Perm' under the Head of the Komi Republic (*Respublikansky blagotvoritel'ny fond Stefana Permskogo pri glave respubliki Komi*).

Spiridonov's decision to support the candidacy of Pitirim as bishop was most probably a well-thought-out political move. Now even the anticommunist Pitirim speaks well of Spiridonov:

Of course, the president is a person from the old mould, he is an atheist.
But he was baptised in childhood, he is a person seeking truth, he is

greatly drawn to faith. He speaks of the repentance of the authorities for desecrated holy places. Usually he lays the foundation stone for new churches. He has always wanted the best for the people and is doing all he can for the republic.

Bishop Manuil of Petrozavodsk was so popular with the public that he was elected a deputy of the Karelian Supreme Soviet, but in early 1993 he voluntarily resigned as a deputy, no longer wishing to combine pastoral responsibilities with political activity. This move increased his authority with the public. He maintained formally good relations with communist Viktor Stepanov, the president of the republic until 1998, but there was no practical cooperation. The finance promised by the authorities for the restoration of the Aleksandr Nevsky Cathedral, an architectural monument, was not in fact forthcoming. The communist authorities restricted clergy access to schools, even though the law allows it. Bishop Manuil says that he supported the 'democrat' Sergei Katandanov as much as he could, and after his election in 1998 as head of the republic Katandanov began to devote more attention to the Orthodox Church. He also permitted voluntary teaching of Christianity in schools, not only by the Orthodox Church but also by other registered denominations, which Stepanov had not allowed, and he made it easier for the diocese to give charitable aid to prisons, homes for the elderly, kindergartens and schools. Katandanov also extends his patronage to the Lutherans, albeit on a smaller scale, and has a favourable attitude to other religious minorities.

The governor of Novgorod *oblast'*, Mikhail Prusak, invites Archbishop Lev to official functions, attends the consecration of restored churches and maintains unofficial contact with the archbishop. In the press Prusak describes himself as a non-believer; he does not favour any particular religion, but emphasises his respect for the Orthodox Church. One notable event on which the governor's office and the diocese cooperate is the 'Christmas marathon' which raises substantial sums donated by local businessmen for aid to the needy.

After the era of Soviet persecution the 1990s have seen the gradual rebirth of ideas of freedom and the practice of democracy in the Russian North, which has once again begun to be aware of its uniqueness and how it differs from other regions. Despite a range of views among the leaders and different customs in each of the northern *oblasti* there is definitely a common denominator. It is probably not a conscious return to historical precedents, but more of a spontaneous movement from below influenced by the traditional spirit of the North which has percolated down through the generations to the present day.

The distinctiveness of northern Russia religiosity is clearly expressed in the activity of the Novgorod youth society of St Antoni the Roman. The aim of the society is to bring secular culture to the Church. It regularly holds lectures and meetings in which priests, musicians, poets and members of the cultural intelligentsia take part. The president of the society, Inna Kuznetsova, is the choir director of one of the city's churches. Since 1992 the society has had about 50 regular members. It has regular contact with the Catholic and Old Believer congregations in Novgorod and members often travel to Christian youth meetings in the West. The society's choir gives concerts in hospitals and schools and at the university. Philosophical discussions with lecturers and students of the university are popular events. The society has an icon-painting workshop and a summer camp near the Iversky Monastery to which it invites people from the liberal wing of the Church in Moscow – followers of Fr Georgi Kochetkov. One of the members, the singer and poet Vladimir Kas'yanov,

has written a ballad about St Antoni the Roman, which he sings to his own guitar accompaniment. Soon a church will be opened at the uni-versity, and it will become a kind of parish for Orthodox students who have been brought up in Novgorod's freedom-loving and open traditions. Kuznetsova described the society's attitude when we interviewed her on 21 April 1999:

The Church is not a ghetto for failures, it is about being open to the world and full of life. The best way for us to realise this is to look to the medieval Novgorod tradition, which was filled with the spirit of freedom, creativity and Christian devotion.

Novgorod priest Fr Nikolai Yershov attracts many intellectuals and students with his democratic views on parish life and church structures. He graduated from the Institute of Literature in Moscow and then from the Leningrad Seminary and Theological Academy. Fr Nikolai considers himself a traditionalist with conservative views on the inner spiritual life, so he is against excessively close links with Catholics and is in favour of the canonisation of the tsar's family. Fr Nikolai is also very critical of the movement around Fr Georgi Kochetkov, which he considers to be sectarian. At the same time he is in favour of the democratisation of the Church and the election of bishops as in ancient Novgorod. According to Fr Nikolai

we need to summon a Council on the same scale and with the same democratic setup as the Council of 1917 and to hear opinions expressed on all aspects of church life by people from all walks of life. This Council will lay the foundation for the gradual reform of the Church in the direction of openness to society, including changing the language of services to Russian.

Fr Nikolai roundly condemns Soviet traditions within the Church, and thus makes a favourable impression on secular intellectuals who are critical of Sergianism.

Probably the clearest expression of the northerners' search for their identity is to be found in the 'Pomor'ye idea', which has emerged as a secular ideology of the Arkhangel'sk intelligentsia and democratic politicians, but which by its nature presupposes a religious component. Its proponents are seeking support in church circles, and the idea is receiving a lively response among clergy born and brought up in the North.

Politics are combined with a sense of the historical identity of the North in the Arkhangel'sk movement Democratic Renaissance of the North (*Demokraticeskoye vrozhdeniye severa*) led by entrepreneur Aleksandr Ivanov. In the early 1990s he was mayor of Arkhangel'sk; in the 1996 elections for governor he took third place with over 10 per cent of the vote. Since 1997 Ivanov has been the chairman of the budget committee of the *oblasti*' Legislative Assembly. Ivanov is not only a politician but also an ideologist, one of the proponents of the regional 'Pomor'ye idea' which pays close attention to religion. Ivanov described the basic precepts of the 'Pomor'ye idea' when we interviewed him in June 1998:

The Pomory have a special feeling of their own dignity and a love of freedom. The reason is that in the North there was no serfdom and the basic organisational form of economic life was not the commune but the cooperative. The sense of having enemies is alien to the Pomory, as there were always enough natural resources for everybody and foreigners were perceived not as competitors but as trading partners. From ancient times

contacts with Europe (by sea Edinburgh, Oslo and Bremen are closer than Moscow) contributed to a Western European consciousness, an absence of xenophobia and respect for democratic institutions. Throughout history the Pomory have despised Muscovite rule, whether tsarist, Soviet or post-Soviet, for its mendacity, cruelty and arbitrariness. The Pomory strive to avoid working for the state and to depend as little as possible on it. Long before the Revolution the people of the North were remarkable for universal literacy. The northerner appreciates the value of education, culture and science. What in central and southern Russia is called patriotism – hatred for the West, hatred for freedom and democracy and hatred for the intelligentsia – from the Pomor'ye point of view is not patriotism but Philistinism. The harsh natural conditions of the North developed special character traits in the Pomory – humility, patience, resoluteness and a unique mixture of pragmatism and mysticism. In the face of the cruel elements we are humble and ask God for mercy; in the face of Muscovite tyranny we also ask God for mercy, as there is no point asking mercy of tyrants. ... Sooner or later the Church will come to reflect our ideas. It will be maintained by the support of the people and not by the authorities. I am an entrepreneur and my firm gives large sums of money to the Church, but as a legislator I do everything to ensure that not one kopeck of the budget goes to finance the Church. We Pomory think that priests and bishops should treat the people as brothers and not like haughty Chinese mandarins. This kind of Asiatic despotism is disgusting.

This northern Russian ideology already has its proponents, outstanding people who are able to help the northerners to an awareness of their own history and towards realising their priorities in social and church life. As good Christians they are always ready to defend the dignity of the individual and to work to maintain the cultural and ecclesiastical wealth of their harsh region. They are aware of their own responsibility for society, the state and the Church, and this achieves more than relying on secular or ecclesiastical leaders. It is this traditional sense of lay responsibility for keeping the Church healthy that is at the heart of the ideology of North Russia.

Notes and References

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- ² S. O. Shalyapin, 'Religioznaya situatsiya na Russkom Severe v istoricheskoi retrospektive (XIII–XIX vv.)', in *Religioznaya zhizn' Arkhangel'skogo Severa: Istoriya i sovremennost'* (Arkhangel'sk, 1997), pp. 6–21.
- ³ *Yevangel'sky tekst v russkoi literature XVIII–XX vv.*, 2 vols. (Petrozavodsk, 1994, 1998).

(Translated from the Russian by Michael Rowe)