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Author(s): SOTSIOLOGICHESKIYE ISSLEDOVANIYA deputy chief editor
Gennadiy Batygin; time and place not specified]

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Subslug: [Interview with Innokentiy, candidate of theology, teacher
at the Leningrad Seminary for Monastic Priests, by
SOTSIOLOGICHESKIYE ISSLEDOVANIYA deputy chief editor
Gennadiy Batygin; time and place not specified]

FULL TEXT OF ARTICLE:

1. [Text] In 1988 at the initiative of UNESCO, not only Christians but also people of various religious and political convictions mark the millennium of the Christianization of Russia (988-1988). This date is a propitious occasion for thinking realistically about the problems of religious life in the USSR. As is known, the basic principles and practice of its state regulation were established in circumstances that were most unfavorable for realism. This is exactly why up to now it has been very difficult to eliminate the 'zone of silence' that has existed here and to call a spade a spade. A mutual desire to deal with this complexity was expressed at the meeting between CPSU Central Committee General Secretary M.S. Gorbachev and the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, Pimen, and members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.

2. Public interest is growing in questions of the interrelationship between religion and culture, ethics and politics. Under the conditions of glasnost and the open clash of viewpoints, a re-evaluation of the cultural-historical legacy is taking place and new hopes are being born. A dialogue on these problems is held by doctor of philosophical sciences, deputy chief editor of SOTSIOLOGICHESKIYE ISSLEDOVANIYA, Gennadiy Batygin and candidate of theology, teacher at the Leningrad Seminary for Monastic Priests, Innokentiy.

3. [Batygin] Your Reverence, first of all I would like to say a few words about why I asked you to hold this conversation. When I was still a student in the philosophy faculty at the Moscow State

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University I, and the overwhelming majority of my fellow students, and perhaps even the teachers, had only a quite vague idea about priests in the church. The view of priests as tricksters and disseminators of spiritual narcotics, a unique kind of "spiritual raw brandy"--a view traditional for the proclaimed ideological stereotypes--could be clearly discerned in this vagueness. This idea prevented us from any dialogue with you in the press. For a long time an invisible but quite rigid line of prohibition was drawn between me, a sociologist, and you, a pastor of the Russian Orthodox Church. It also seemed to me that you were separated not only from the state but also from the usual life of laymen, or at least that you had no contact with our daily problems. Only once did I think about this line, when the now late Valentin Ferdinandovich Asmus, the teacher of my teachers, for some reason put aside his exercise books and talked to us, the second-year students, about the meaning of the words "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The meaning of the words from the Sermon on the Mount has not been reduced and it set down roots through the millennia. And each day, including today, we face the eternal problems. One of them is the search for truth. In this regard our dialogue today is extremely topical and essential for the process of renewal, because apart from anything else, renewal also means a return to values that are eternal but subject to doubt. Dialogue is essential for joining the strength of believers and non-believers in solving urgent and vital question. And we have many believers in the country-- from 15 percent to 60 percent of the population in various regions.

4. Today, in the atmosphere of glasnost and democratization we are learning to deal with voluntarist stereotypes that have compelled us not only to accept the inevitable as the reality but also pretend that many of the processes that do not fit into the ideological mold of the "new man" somehow do not exist at all. This also applies in full to the reproduction of religious values--the so-called individual vestiges. I think that we rightly talk about the coexistence of a religious culture and a secular culture in Soviet society, and a diversity of types of perceptions of the world--a diversity that cannot be reduced to some scheme of "the scientific and the nonscientific." How can this very complex sociological problem be resolved? First and foremost by not dramatizing the differences in views that are well known and by seeking out what it is that unites us. And what unites us is responsibility for the future, the desire to preserve the cultural heritage, and belief in the need to renew life and general human spiritual values.

5. The restructuring is not easy. Even recently, when the editorial office of the journal SOTSILOGICHESKIYE ISSLEDOVANIYA asked you to enter into discussion with the well-known American Sovietologists and religious expert William Fletcher about believers in the USSR, it was

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terrible for me: what might happen! The stereotype of "cavalry" propaganda--with bells on!-- enrooted in the consciousness hampers us: believers and church people are either stupid or have unseemly designs. Soviet people should know that the church is separated from the state but not separated from society. In this connection your view on sociological problems in the spiritual life of our fellow citizens and your position as a theological scholar, historian and simply a man are of undoubted interest.

6. [Innokentiy] Forgive me, but the last-named position seems to me to be perhaps the one that is most suitable for this kind of dialogue. Any "churchman," "theological scholar" or "historian" in our country lives in the same social conditions as any person. As a citizen he is subject to the same legal standards and social laws. Perhaps the "proud stare of the foreigner" of an American Sovietologist would not catch this, but for us this should be obvious.

7. With regard to the "stereotype of cavalry propaganda," for you, a sociologist, it is no secret what its influence has been on the shaping of the intellectual climate and ideological standards. At least your early ideas about us, the clerics of the Russian Orthodox Church, bore, I would say, the veneer of a certain romanticism, and the propaganda to which you refer could hardly have counted on that. In fact, the alluring prospect was separated from the hustle and bustle of this world. But as you rightly noted, an invisible but quite rigid line of prohibition was in fact drawn between us. It exists even now in the consciousness of many, including quite respected people. A more critical look at the line between the "permitted" and the "banned" will, I hope, help in some degree to place in its proper perspective the question of freedom of choice and assessment of the cultural legacy.

8. [Batygin] You mentioned freedom. F. Engels wrote that free will is the ability to make decisions from a position of knowledge. But it would seem that people have different knowledge and a different perception of exactly the same realities of life. There are probably even people today who would like to force you to abandon your religious convictions and enforce a "materialistic truth." And not at all because religiosity, which "has still not been overcome," interferes with their lives; they are obsessed with concern for what is near and dear to them, its "ideological maturity," and ultimately, "all-around and harmonious development."

9. Here we are not dealing only with religion. We often encounter an alternative postulation, as, for example, one that is far from being a private issue: are you for perestroyka or against it? This kind of open and naive sociology seems to be generally radical and

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testifies to the revolutionary intentions of the questioner. The trouble is that almost everyone is for perestroyka... Including those who are for coercive assertion of the "ideal." I have a cause for complaint: I read in one newspaper that there is no class struggle in our country, nor, consequently, class enemies, but in numerous commentaries I have been categorized as an enemy of the people, and there have been demands for my repression. Is this also today's method of polemic? Again we see how the destructive forces are growing, how some people want to find "the enemy," how they try to exhume from the underground the ideology of pogrom.

10. We have become accustomed to living by creating within ourselves a wordy mythical set of scenery and we fear to look there behind the scenery bathed in artificial light, into the shadow cast by the scenery, into the unlighted and gloomy space where we find the "kitchen" of the play being performed: into the semi-darkness quite different from the nuances of the producer and the technical and rhetorical equipage. Now it is becoming obvious that we are simultaneously the audience and the actors in this spectacle of life, and that it serves no purpose to point the finger at anyone. The devil often turns up behind the most desperate "fighter."

11. However, the process of renewal is irreversible. The link of time is being restored and we are beginning to look into history for the real causes of human tragedy. A re-evaluation of values is taking place, including the values of the past, and it is difficult and painful. Obviously this is the way it should be: memory is ambiguous; it depends on what we want to see in the past and on the kind of intellectual and moral baggage with which we move into the past.

12. [Innokentiy] When preparing our students at the theological schools in the Moscow Patriarchy, for a number of historical reasons the task of giving them a serious philosophical training has not been brought up. Therefore although you recalled the definition of free will, what came to mind for me was a definition of freedom in general, one that I heard from one of the church bishops at a recent international scientific conference in Moscow on problems of theology and spirituality devoted to the millennium of the Christianization of Russia: "Freedom is an attitude of perfect love between two beings, between God and us." In this context talk about class enemies is hardly apropos. Why cannot the break in the link with time be restored by human hands? The real reasons for human tragedies are now clear to many, and perhaps they were earlier.

13. You talk about the irreversibility of the renewal of life in our country. Here, it would seem that boundless prospects are being opened up for the unsophisticated gaze. Just the mere formulation "re-evaluating the cultural-historical legacy" is worth it. For a

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desire to look at the past in and of itself imposes an "intellectual and ethical baggage." You have probably recently been hearing, even when standing in line, about the "permanent value of the cultural legacy." I suspect that no one, including people with a "higher education," can provide a clear definition of these concepts.

14. It is as if everything were intuitively clear. I recall the shy servant Ivan Ivanovich Brilliantov, who late in the last century made known the long-since closed and almost deserted Ferapontov monastery. He not only drew attention to our ecclesiastical, historical and cultural holy things but in 1918 even traveled there from Petrograd so as to continue the work on its restoration despite everything.

15. The priests Pavel Florenskiy and Mikhail Shik, and Count Yu.A. Olsufev. We have no right to forget their role in the preservation of the Troitsa-Sergiyev Monastery. Professor I.Ye. Yevseyev of the Petrograd Theological Academy, who sponsored a scientific publication of the Slavic Bible and raised the question of a more perfect Russian translation of it. Academician N.K. Nikolskiy, who as long ago as 1902 embarked on the titanic work of preparing a collection of the works of Russian writers since ancient times. If historical circumstances made it possible to accomplish merely the undertakings mentioned, the question of the cultural legacy would be clearer for us.

16. However, this does not at all mean that in our times our culture does not have its devotees. Thus, for example, Marina Sergeevna Serebryakova and her associates are heroically preserving the Cathedral of Our Lady in Vologda Oblast, with its frescoes of Dionysius--the only complete architectural and artistic ensemble dating from the 15th century.

17. The conference that I mentioned, which was attended not only by theologians but also philologists and historians from scientific centers abroad and from Moscow University and the USSR Academy of Sciences, showed that the tasks of preserving monuments of Russian national and general human importance can be resolved despite the obvious historical losses.

18. But let us return to the theme of "prohibition." For the "line of prohibition" that you mentioned passed through the consciousness of many, and it now passes not only through the environment of social relations but also the field of spiritual relations. Here we are dealing with an unambiguous division between, if I may express it thus, "the sheep and the goats," typical both of a certain genre of atheistic studies of religion and of certain popular works on the history of ancient Russian literature and the arts. What I have in mind is the division between religious content

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and the esthetic forms of works.

19. [Batygin] But this is obvious to many people. In the secular literature it is accepted that we distinguish between the icon as a cult object and as an artistic image. For example, the Vladimir "Devotion to the Virgin Mary" icon in the Tretyakov Gallery. They say that the icon exhibited there represents an esthetic, and only an esthetic, value. Of course, for an understanding of the esthetic value of the "Devotion" it is necessary to be aware of the symbolism of the icon. At least it is essential to be able to distinguish between the "Devotion" and the "Oranta."

20. [Innokentiy] Well, this is simple. What is not understood is something else: how can the religious content of works of ecclesiastical art be torn away and the perception of its esthetic form retained? And if you call to mind the iconography of the Holy Mother, permit me to note that the only argument cited in the literature in favor of this kind of division is that the representation is "as if alive." That is all! I do not see any serious grounds for so categorical a division between the religious and the esthetic. Depending on your convictions, you may believe, for example, in the "phenomenalism" of the icon and cross yourself or simply experience a shock from its inner depth. But in any event it is essential to understand the meaning instated in the whole work, without reservations of the "on the one hand.. and on the other hand..." type. Unfortunately, the revival of interest in the culture of the past here is being combined with a horrifying lack of knowledge about the elementary questions of doctrine and religious practice.

21. [Batygin] There can be no doubt that we should all know as much as possible about the history of our own people. Intellectual darkness and ignorance, of course, can become a basis for atheism, but who needs this kind of atheism? If orthodoxy is our traditional doctrine we must have an adequately complete idea about its dogma and religious practice. However, Islam, Judaism, Catholicism, a number of Protestant denominations, Buddhism, and Shamanism also exist in the USSR, and no one would be hindered from learning about them at what might be called first hand rather than just from the "Atheist's Handbook." Yes, I have in mind freedom to teach and study religion, which is not banned by Soviet law. What is banned is another matter. Without going into the niceties of the legislation on cults--and there are many "niceties" here--let me say that we are still not observing full glasnost in this sphere.

22. I would like to touch on another subject about which they prefer to remain silent. Sooner or later death comes to every person. Many people have a materialistic attitude toward this but there are people

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who need confession, even if only for consolation. Attempts to talk seriously about replacing the words of a pastor with some greater effectiveness for some ritual service seem to me cynical.

23. However, the main thing promoting the elimination of the "line of prohibition" is possession of information. No prohibitions on knowledge are in line with the legal establishments of a civilized society, but our need for knowledge about religion is very great. This can be seen from the great demand for books that provide a scientific description of religious doctrine, hopefully without commentaries that are insulting for believers and unpleasant to read even for a person with no religious convictions. I happened to encounter a certain variety of coercive-- phantasmagoric!--blasphemy. Glued into a book of quotations from Holy Scripture... Here it was, the "wiles of history"! The quotations cut from books that are the apotheosis of senseless cynicism triumphant--Leo Taksil's "The Bible for Laughs" and "The Gospel for Laughs." Truly they know not what they do.

24. We find the sources of the Russian literary tradition in Metropolitan Ilarion's "The Word of the Law and Heaven." Why then today, when the recreation of our cultural legacy is taking place by moving toward truth and life is the Bible--the book that mankind has held in reverence for millennia (and today in many countries in the world oaths are sworn on the Bible, and not at all out of naivete)--if not banned here, then in extremely short supply? What if its content is far remote from dialectical materialism and historical materialism. What if someone does not accept that the Word is divinely inspired; a person reading even a small part of it must experience the illumination of true light, that state of "trepidation" (I use the words of S.S. Averintsev, spoken by him with respect to a contemporary "rethinking" of the topic of the Gospels) that arises when one is concerned with a miracle. I am convinced that despite the shifts that have been planned, the problem remains what might be called painful. The Bible is essential not only for the millions of believers but for any person of culture.

25. Confessing a faith is another matter. This is a matter of personal choice and freedom of conscience. The issue is quite clear to me. No one, even less today, bans the study of doctrine and the history of religion. At least our and your generations do not remember the times when churches were being destroyed.

26. [Innokentiy] But the issue is not clear to me. Here you have a newspaper cutting on your desk. Let me read the ABC that reminded me of my own candidness. The author writes that the people should know their own history, their own heroes. Then he points out the directions of social thinking that "they understand" differently.

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Here: "The fourth direction (for myself, let me add: I as a Christian and an Orthodox theologian follow this direction) unearths and restores the old Orthodox times. Not only what is artistically beautiful (on which there is no argument, it is essential) but everything Orthodox, 'sacred.' And for this we count from 1917. It really was a turning point, including for the 'sacred'; it really did 'cut the ground away' from under the 'sacred.' And if Orthodoxy is regarded as our history then, yes, this history was indeed cut away from under, and rightly so." This was written not in the years of repression but today, in the period of perestroyka.

27. Forgive me for such an extensive quote, but I want to show you that the "ideology of cutting the ground away" is also well known to our generation. As if someone has a supreme prerogative to show people what can be "unearthed" in history and what cannot, a prerogative to sort out the historical past into the "beautiful" and the "old Orthodox times."

28. Here is another example testifying at least to the lack of understanding of religious culture. Early this year the draft "Provisions on Procedure for Publishing Books, Brochures and Publications by Authors" was published. To some it seems a bold step in the direction of democratization. But see how deeply the stereotypes have eaten into the consciousness. The author cannot use his own facilities to publish books "propagandizing war, violence, national dissension, racial or national exclusivity, or religious-mystical doctrines at variance with the principles of communist morality and ethics." This list speaks for itself through the commas. Religious-philosophical literature is set side by side with works at variance with constitutional principles. The present Constitution permits absolutely all citizens to confess their own faith and religious propaganda (despite a widely held opinion) is nowhere banned by present legislation. But freedom for atheistic propaganda has long since become the "talk of the town."

29. [Batygin] Permit me, but various religious organizations have the opportunity to make use of state printing houses...

30. [Innokentiy] And have you seen many publications put out by religious organizations, or tried to acquire them?

31. [Batygin] I saw the church calendar in your office, but I have not tried to acquire a Bible, or rather "get hold" of one from a speculator.

32. [Innokentiy] Meanwhile the publishing section of the Moscow Patriarchy has no opportunity to provide Orthodox Christians even with a church calendar.

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33. However, let us return to the question of question the Russian spiritual legacy. We have dwelled on the fact that we do have scholars, laymen and church people devoted to the cause of preserving the monuments of history. Interest in ancient Russian is growing in the consciousness of the people. You have on your bookshelf a beautifully bound, compact and inexpensive edition of the "Trinity" anthology compiled by G.I. Vzdornov-- the highest achievement of ancient Russian art. Thank God that there is not so much foreign text as in similar publications.

34. No, I am in no way against propaganda of our art abroad. But it is quite obvious that it is primarily the Russian people who should be given broad access to their own history and culture. Do what you will, it is still impossible to separate the lofty beauty of the "Trinity"--the icons--from the idea of the Divine Trinity. Permit me to open the book and read one piece: "The image determines the balance found between the soul and the spirit, the flesh and ethereality, feeling and thought, life and death, suffering and the passionless, eternal and immortal existence in heaven. And because of its amazing multiple layers, equaled nowhere else, Rublev's 'Trinity' has been and remains equally arresting both for the theological scholar and for the ordinary person who looks in it for an image of consolation when building his own life."

35. [Batygin] Obviously no one has the right to dictate to a person the method whereby he perceives cultural values. He must also take up freedom of choice, and responsibility for his own position in life. Perhaps I am mistaken, but it is much easier and simpler to exist in an atmosphere of rigid prohibitions and proscriptions, in an atmosphere in which there is no burden of choice, and hence no responsibility to one's own conscience and to people. "Authorized freedom" frees us of responsibility. If it is said that ancient orthodoxy is bad then there is no need to think or doubt: "cutting the ground from under one's feet" (the very phrase is not only symbolic but also ominous and factious--it is common knowledge that during the period of repression the believers shared totally in the fate of their own people).

36. A proclaimed "truth" about the reactionary nature of "the clergy" was not necessary for many in their arguments. B. Pasternak spoke very accurately about the self-proof of truths proclaimed by the revolution. It is amazing, but violence in the sphere of spiritual life is also a unique manifestation of freedom of thought (again Pasternak: "The man who is not free always idealizes his bondage"), and at the same time a fetishization of "the people." Instead of roughly drawn democratic decorations we have ochlocracy and domination by those dark forces that deprive people of their

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reason and turn the people into a mob. There is no place for the individual here. The monolithic mass discards and destroys individuality and 'differentness.' And all the same, religion is the main thing that enables a person to find within himself the strength not to follow the majority to evil and manage to retain his faith. Even the daily expectation that they will force him to silence by knocking away the stool from under him or by some other method does not stop him. In this sense Pavel Florenskiy, Sergiy Bulgakov, Andrey Platonov, Osip Mandelstam and millions of other people suffered the same fate. Was it a matter of religiosity? Even today under conditions of democracy in the ascendant, public opinion is polarized: we can in no way become accustomed to the existence of a different position or recognize pluralism of opinion and evaluations. It would seem that we have no other way than to remain homogeneous and monolithic to the point of impermeability. But the times are changing. The process of revival of the cultural legacy and of the historical memory of the people is under way. We are also observing a revival of religious values, even if in the form of the attraction of neophytes. Here it is important to see the ground on which the fruits of freedom of thought are growing--'by their fruits ye shall know them.' This is not simply because now in the social atmosphere there is too much that is superficial, some kind of cursory parboiling; it is also benighted calm deep down.

37. Let me give you an example. Various kinds of debating clubs, societies, associations and circles are now springing up like mushrooms after the rain. A huge hall is filled to overflowing, and the social scientists and journalists stand there on the stage. A professor explains how to combine the plan and the market, how the predictions have been made. He is given a few minutes up there on the stage, with the lamp burning, and when the public gets bored the speaker looks around cautiously... And already the hall is impatient and someone whistles from somewhere. But although the professor is a experienced person he does not know how to control the audience. And then it is all over: disruption! Disruption of the economy, disruption of the family, disruption of the school, disruption of science, disruption of culture, disruption of atomic power... Let the Ministry of Defense take it all under public control! The hall explodes with applause, eyes water, hearts beat--'let's do it!'

38. Under the conditions of perestroika and freedom of thought combined with a shortage of information, we would very much like to hear, even from the side, 'what is all this?' Tell us about things under Yezhov, under Trotskiy, who killed Kirov? why did you not write this in Kaganovich's time? where is the full text of the Khrushchev report? the masonic Jews burned the Troitsa-Sergiyev monastery, let us have the 'Pamyat' sociological center, the keepers of the faith are the vanguard of perestroika... Enough! The following analogy

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comes to mind: a pendulum of the public frame of mind swung for so long to the right and now swinging sharply to the left, and then to the right again, and some time is required for it to reach equilibrium.

39. [Innokentiy] What is needed is not time but wisdom, or, more accurately, what in Orthodox ascetic practice is called the wisdom of humility [smirennomudriye] for a sober and comprehensive examination of the historical experience of the past--ancient and modern--and recognition of our own responsibility for it by right of national legacy.

40. [Batygin] Do you think that a national spirit of the Russian people exists, can it be considered the "keeper of the faith"? How is the national question resolved in the Orthodox theology?

41. [Innokentiy] In the Orthodox ecclesiology (the teaching on the Church) it is resolved simply. The Church is shaped according to the attribute of the land, that is, the place of one's residence. The Russian Orthodox Church is the orthodox church in Russia but not a church for Russians. Historically, representatives of many nationalities have made up its clergy and flock, and never in the thousand-year history has our Church known the problem of "national purity."

42. In general, the problem of the foreigner does not exist in the Church as a Christian community. I recall the words of the apostle Paul when addressing the diverse national, class and property relationships among the Christian community in Galatia--an area in Asia Minor--during the first decades of the existence of Christianity: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bondman nor freeman, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

43. As far as the Russian people are concerned, this is a great nation. And not only in the geographical sense but also the spiritual and cultural sense. And if you talk about the Russian national self-awareness, as for the Orthodox self-awareness, then nationalism is alien to it. The problem of nationalism is not a theological problem but a sociological problem, but it seems that nationalism can be understood and even justified in small ethnic groups located within a multinational environment. Here, nationalism is justified to the extent that it does not pass beyond the confines of a people's spiritual self-determination. And as far as I know, as an historian, Russian nationalism must be a deviation from our culture and from Russian spiritual traditions. Today it is even difficult to separate it from lack of culture and lack of spirituality.

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44. [Batygin] We have really come round to talking about "Pamyat." And I would like to recall that some representatives of the association long ago advanced the slogan "Orthodoxy as Homeland"...

45. [Innokentiy] Let us first of all examine what we mean by "Pamyat." We have read articles in newspapers and journals and, moreover, we have at our disposal separate testimony from eyewitnesses. It is not certain that those people who represent themselves as members of the association have a proper right to do so. I am not convinced that "Pamyat" exists as a organization in the full sense of the word. But at least neither you nor I know its composition or program.

46. Preservation of the monuments of Russian culture is one of "Pamyat's" aims. This aim is acceptable to all of us. But we are evidently not interested in the "Pamyat" association as such but with its associated trend of nationalistic activism. It is possible that "Pamyat" is a myth. I hear from people who call themselves members of the association that they are against nationalistic slogans and demagoguery.

47. Let me note that using the outward attributes of Orthodox theology in combination with the propaganda of ideas dreamed up by those who essentially advocate enmity and political force testifies to the ignorance and demagogic nature of these kinds of declarations. A superficial knowledge is worse than no knowledge at all. Evidently having read in popular publications that the "church people" at one time proclaimed Moscow as a "third Rome," the Russophile nationalists have seized on this phrase. But they fail to take into account the fact that when Filofey talked about a "third Rome" he used the words in a eschatological sense and was talking neither about political greatness nor the advance of "the latest times." Nothing is said here in the spirit of majestic-monumental exclusivity.

48. Finally--and this is most important--we are obliged to consider who is to blame for the destruction of Russian holy things. People remember first and foremost the Church of Christ the Savior. In fact, the loss of this incomparably beautiful monument to Russian glory is irreplaceable. It is mainly Kaganovich who is abused here. But he did not do what he is accused of alone, in a desert. It would be more correct to raise the question about general national responsibility for what happened. As a historian of the Russian Church, I see clearly here a certain share of responsibility on the part of the prerevolutionary clergy, which was not adequately engaged in bringing enlightenment to the people, first and foremost the peasantry.

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49. [Batygin] Whether we want it or not the mass repressions, the atmosphere of all-embracing "vigilance" cultivated over the decades, and the fear of mutual denunciation have made concern for the past misplaced. Even looking into the past was not without danger. The uniquely interpreted idea of "the new man"--godless, loveless, unrepentant--replaced individual responsibility with loyalty to the regime. And this is the only explanation for the actions of those who, perhaps sincerely in some kind of strange passion, tried to straighten out their own times and not the past. One of my friends grew up in the village of Troyebortnoye in Bryansk Oblast. He tells how during the Thirties the priest in this tiny Russian village was killed, by a shot fired through a window from a sawed-off gun. The police never found the killer but the village knew who had long had no special liking for the "long-skirt." The old priest had in fact been neglecting his pastoral duties--he performed the baptisms and funeral services when he had to, but mostly he worked in his kitchen garden. All the same, an end was made to religiosity--even without an order from some authorized agent.

50. [Innokentiy] As a Christian I do not settle the accounts. But without an understanding of the past we cannot be full-fledged people of the present and the future. Why did doctor of philosophical sciences I.A. Krylev publish at one time an article in which it was "proved" that religious activists (it was a question of a commune of teetotalers who were socially and politically harmless) are "enemies of the people."? And why even today does he accuse writers of "flirting" with religion? The explanation for this goes far beyond the framework of purely personal characteristics. It is the business of sociologists to study the genesis and dynamics of sociopolitical situations that create the very opportunity for political denunciations.

51. [Batygin] Already the approach to the problem and the perception of the world by pseudo-patriots are deeply eclectic. Strange as it may seem, this same approach to the problem is taken by some of their "unmaskers." Religious culture and the demagogic shouts of the alleged fighters for the Orthodox past are thrown together in the same group. And moreover, to commit to the real state of class affairs is supposedly a petty bourgeois social base for religious-political and nationalistic attitudes. With the concept of class comes the idea of the individual as the "spokesman" for someone's objectively hostile interests, and this suggests the conclusion of intrigues by the special services: the nightmare syndrome of persecution grows. As a result we again have the abuse and further searches for the enemy. The circle is closed. Let us be consistent in our reasoning. Who needs the ideology of pogrom? Not only not the Russian people. Both the nationalistic appeals and the attempt to find behind them a "petty bourgeoisie" seem at least

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inappropriate. But what social reasons, not necessarily class reasons, should be here? We shall not understand the situation if we explain everything by intellectual darkness and ignorance.

52. [Innokentiy] The issue is broader: what actual trends in public life gave rise to "Pamyat"? The process of renewal is, apart from anything else, also the overcoming of totalitarian, "dichotomous" consciousness, when people perceive a lie not as a deviation but an objective reality made aware in our sensations; closing the gap between word and deed, and word and word. "Pamyat" is trying in its own way to close this gap and it is therefore a certain social force that cannot be ignored, the more so since some of its supporters appeal to Orthodox values.

53. [Batygin] I am also deeply in consonance with "Pamyat's" initiatives aimed at preserving the culture of the home and. Other people who declare themselves representatives of the association are taking an obviously chauvinist position. The impression is being created that we have several quite different "Pamyat" associations. These issues must be discussed in the press and the leaders of the movement given an opportunity to speak, and then perhaps what is secret will become clear. However, in my opinion, there is no religiosity as such in the "orthodox" initiatives of "Pamyat." There is merely a form of hidden social conflict that is being transformed over time under conditions in which the criteria delineating the secular consciousness from the religious is, as it were, being dissolved.

54. For a long time I had no doubt at all that the growth in education and secular culture would little by little supplant religious belief--"prejudices"--in people's life. Today I am ready to testify to an increase in true believers among quite well educated people. I remember the situation when the fact that the cosmonauts recorded nothing resembling heaven in orbit around the Earth was considered a serious argument in favor of atheism. Today these kinds of "arguments" can elicit only a smile or puzzlement. Obviously education and faith are things that are at least not mutually exclusive. Again I must recall the name of Pavel Florenskiy's father. Mathematician, philosopher, linguist, electrical engineer and mechanic, a researcher on permafrost, he was a true Christian, an Orthodox priest and theologian. He perished anonymously in the GULAG among the millions of martyrs, both believers and nonbelievers.

55. One way or another science no longer regards itself as the apex of the "pyramid of knowledge," at least it finds shifting sand in its own foundation and is turning hopefully to "metaphysical" values and to "human" truths.

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56. Strange processes are also taking place in the mass consciousness. In the age of general computerization and robotization many nonbelievers or those who consider themselves nonbelievers have no doubts about the baneful capabilities of the "evil eye" and believe in magicians and "flying saucers," and also in the holy eucharist and the redemption of sin. In the West they talk increasingly about a religious renaissance in the USSR. It must be acknowledged that these processes are unexpected for Soviet sociologists.

57. Along with other journalists I recently talked with the leaders of unofficial youth associations. The representative for "Sistemy" (an analogue of the hippy movement), Vitaliy, substantiated very competently and convincingly rejection of the acquisition of material things and violence in any form, service in the Armed Forces, and work--"for work is essentially slavery." I asked him how members of "Sistemy" should act in a case in which they needed money or, if worst came to worst, to eat. Looking through his pince-nez into space Vitaliy said the following: "Is not the soul food?" And he went on to recall the "birds of the air" and the "grass of the fields." No, he is as far removed from the church as, say, a collector of icons. What is this? "Excess" social symbolism typical of fringe people, or a form of dissent, or a variety of religion? Is not a unique diversification taking place today, a consolidation of diversity, of religious values, and their penetration into the secular environment and a mixing with politics, morals, culture, even science and economics?

58. [Innokentiy] There is a science of the principles of the interpretation of texts--hermeneutics--and I am sorry that young people remain in ignorance about the true meaning of the words that they have learned. Some kind of awakening of spiritual life really is taking place today, accompanied, as you have expressed it, by a diversification of religious values. It is not so much a renaissance as a "blind" search. But of course, there is spiritual "fascination" in enthusiasm for, for example, "parareligious" cults and "the calling up of spirits," or levitation or Krishnaism. But these are all transitional forms. And we should not underestimate the possibility of the coexistence of diverse, including transitional, forms of spiritual life. A person has the chance of moving from fascination to a real knowledge of God, a chance of gaining spiritual freedom.

59. [Batygin] Father Innokentiy, I have a firm hope that over time the official or semiofficial restrictions on religious life will be eased. Already today we see stricter observance of the legislation on cults on the part of state organs; at least in the registration of new communities is no longer an insoluble problem. The Tolgskiy

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convent, closed 60 years ago, has become an active cloister for women. Monks with medical training will serve in a hospice for the aged set up in a monastery. The decision of the Yaroslavl Oblast soviet is not an isolated example of fruitful cooperation between state and church.

60. At the same time, normalization of the position of the church and of believers is only just starting in our country. We carry the heavy burden of problems "from the old regime." In my view, the main thing is to make what is secret open. Many enforceable enactments, instructions and explanations concerning religious life remain a closed book, and too much depends on the personality of the person authorized by the USSR Council of Ministers Council on Religious Affairs in any given region. He can always say "No provision is made for this!" And everything. I have never once heard that a dispute between believers and the state has been decided in the courts. What I have in mind is civil suits... Meanwhile, as they say among laymen, the game is all at one goal mouth.

61. But this is still only half the trouble. Believers find themselves in the position of outcasts not at all because of the official separation of church and state. As you have said, a believer lives in the same social conditions as any person, and at first glance is not isolated in any way. But, as the apostle said, "as unknown and yet well known." It is difficult choose the exact words to describe the very complex sociological problem of the position of believers in the secular social environment. Here, of course, there is not always an articulated allusion, an allusion of dissent, and in fact, under conditions of the declared and actually affirmed spiritual unity of Soviet people the adoption of nonmaterialist convictions means nothing but that until we get the hidden challenges and social conflict. But I think that because the phenomenon of religious belief itself is perceived by the mass psychology as "strange" rather than alien, pseudoconflict is in some way remarkable. I am sure that your appearance in a cassock on the street makes passersby look round with a so-called unhealthy interest. A conversation took place at the institute about the life and teaching of a religious philosopher. The rumor had been spread that a real monk was coming, perhaps even the archimandrite. The hall was full. Even the young girls wanted to watch... But to our astonishment the monk was just a normal person. Even the representative of the party buro was disappointed. Shaw was wrong, but the seminar continued late into the night.

62. In my opinion, the problem of the coexistence of the church and of society is also enrooted here. It cannot be resolved "from above," but life itself is already looking for ways to escape from the impasse: a person's devotion to any religious denomination should

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be perceived as quite ordinary, even if interesting, as something healthy, or ultimately, with indifference.

63. Everything that I am discussing now is variations of the same phenomenon: violent alienation of religious culture and religious consciousness from the officially approved culture and the "standard" social consciousness--an alienation that is not uniformly negative and mutually exclusive, like a plus or minus, but the kind that could be described by Jaspers' paradoxical phrase "love-hate." There is astonishment here, and rejection, and a permanent attraction to real values, and hope, and fear... But most of all there is an obedience: if it is said that there is no God then that means that there is: God is dead and everything is allowed.

64. It is impossible not to see in everything that is now happening and being retained in our minds the anti-values brought to us since the time of the journal BEZBOZHENIK. What is purely human, true and lucid, what lives always in the soul, or perhaps the conscience, coexists, sometimes quite peacefully, with the awareness of an obligation "to deliver a rebuff." It seems to me that when we have finished recording our conversation here and begin to pass it through the editors, from somewhere out of nowhere--at least for us--there will arise a desire (addressed at me, a Marxist) to deliver to you an ideological rebuff. In the dispute with you I am obliged to "win," and this is my social role.

65. It is too naive and simple to attribute the relapses of ideological bans to Stalinism and point the finger at the past. The past is being reproduced every day and the dead seize the living... You and Fr Boris Danilenko and other Christians--Orthodox and Old Believers-- recently met with junior scholars from a prestigious academy institute. I remember the atmosphere of real interest, trust and a desire for the truth, without the slightest hint of people trying to foist their opinions on each other. We wanted just one thing--to know! And after your departure a continuation of the discussion took place at a crossroads in Moscow under the street lamps with several young representatives of a high Komsomol organ. In the hall they had been observers rather than participants, but here they spoke out directly: defects had been permitted in the organization of the meeting and atheists had been unable to deliver a rebuff to the church people. We were unable to justify ourselves, and we included some experts on religion with doctorate degrees.

66. What did the Komsomol people have in mind? No matter what, deep in their young, clear thinking a scheme had been laid down, clear-cut, like an order: "Us or them."

67. The "strange" position of believers in society also

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superimposes a 'strange' imprint on their consciousness. Here we see similar problems, but 'in reverse.' The unsatisfactory catechization of parishioners is well known, and few understand the meaning of the liturgy, and very few know the basis of the Orthodox doctrine-- the 'Articles of Faith.' As a result of the low level of religiosity in the structure of religious behavior the sphere of ritual is over-emphasized, but the main issue remains a man's soul. What is happening here? It seems to me that sometimes, even if in exceptional cases, religiosity acquires the form of a unique cultural-ecological 'ghetto' whence a person surveys the world with the detestation of an outsider.

68. Perhaps future researchers on the destiny of Christianity will note among the trials it endures not only persecution (which is powerless to destroy the faith) but also spiritual pharisaism, devouring--in equal measure--the souls of believers and nonbelievers. Let us remember what Pasternak said: 'Everything is drowning in pharisaism.'

69. Why am I absorbed with these generally trivial details? Obviously a church separated from the state, or more accurately the Orthodox community, possesses one 'advantage' over other non-state public associations, even unofficial ones, namely, it is 'unofficially' separated from society and is a certain 'internal border' (I take this idea from the religious expert Sergey Filatov). It is impossible to insure normal activity for any and all congregations in a society merely by decree. What is needed is normal democracy, political culture and the habit of respect for human rights.

70. It is not enough to establish freedom of conscience by decree. Conscience is the kind of thing that needs no permission; it is or it is not. Freedom of religion becomes a reality only when conscience becomes a matter of the personal freedom of each person, a matter of personal choice. Today we talk about freedom, alternative thinking and the need for different thinking and political pluralism. But the renewal of life is possible only given the rejection of the 'image of the enemy' and total acceptance of the doctrine of nonviolence as an ethic and principle of the interrelationships between people. And of peace as a state of the soul, of moral purity and belief in good. There are values that cannot but be sacred for believers and nonbelievers if, of course, a person has not lost his humanity. These are 'thou shalt not kill,' 'thou shalt not steal,' 'honor thy father and thy mother,' 'they shalt not bear false witness'...

71. [Innokentiy] You have talked about peace as a state of the soul... The great suppliant of Russia, the Reverend Serafim Sarovskiy said: 'Acquire a soul at peace and thousands around you will be

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saved." But where should we take this? At the Feast of the Passover Christ said to his disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And if you talk about freedom, then the most important thing here is perhaps freedom from prejudices, which enslave a person, even when the powers-that-be do not hamper political freedom. How often we see those who are slaves to their own passions and prejudices ruling in a particular social sphere! When I perform the sacrament of baptism and say "I baptize this bondman of God..." I know that it is precisely this devotion to God that brings the person freedom from sin.

72. [Batygin] As we wind up this conversation let us try to formulate where we have come and what the result is.

73. [Innokentiy] As a Christian I make each questioner aware of my hopes, and I think that today I have done this, even though only in part. As far as the results of this dialogue are concerned, let the reader judge for himself. "The time is favorable..."

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