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## The National Idea and Christianity\*

SERGEI LEZOV

### Christianity after Auschwitz

Aggressive nationalism and antisemitism are being cultivated in Russian society today, and Jews are leaving Russia as a result. The phenomenon promises a multitude of serious consequences for the future. It is normally examined in a purely political context. When an attempt is made to assess it in a historical context, the context is usually that of our own history, that is, the historical context that is closest to us: Russian nationalist thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Russian state imperialism over the past three centuries, ten centuries of Russian Christianity and so on. We Russians have always been attracted by historiosophical problems, and so much has been written in this field that anyone now analysing antisemitism who wants to base his work on an understanding of Russian history feels like someone attending a public meeting where everyone is shouting and no one is listening. Any publicist already has an opinion on the Jews, on St Vladimir, on the cause of the Russian revolution and the church schism of the seventeenth century, on the Russian Idea, on Dostoyevsky, on Lenin, on the origins and significance of Russian communism, on the real essence of Orthodoxy and on much else besides.

It seems to me that for a serious discussion to take place on twentieth-century Russian nationalism and on the place of Orthodoxy and antisemitism *within* this phenomenon, we need to approach it from a point of view that is above the level of the usual political and historiosophical debate. I would like to propose such an approach in the hope that it will prove useful to the reader as he or she considers the subject.

Many people will very likely agree that one of the most important inventions of the twentieth century was the mass extermination camp. Our century will go down in history as the age of the *gulag* and of Auschwitz. As a Christian and a historian of modern Christian thought, I am professionally interested in attempts to think through this genuinely new phenomenon from a *theological* point of view.

The reader would thus be justified in expecting an account of how Orthodox theology has 'thought through' the *gulag* and everything this word implies; he or she would be justified in expecting a report on the theme 'Russian Christianity after the *gulag*'. There is, however, no Orthodox 'thinking through' of the *gulag* – unless of course we include the writings of those authors mentioned in the second part of this study, 'Russian Orthodoxy and the new patriotism'. *There is no post-gulag Orthodox*

\*This article first appeared in Russian under the title 'Natsional'naya ideya i khristianstvo' in the journal *Oktyabr*' no. 10 (1990), pp. 148–60.

*theology*, for the simple reason that there is now no Christian theology in Russian at all.

There remains Auschwitz. I hope to demonstrate that some attempts to make sense of Auschwitz in western Christian thought may be important for us too.

## I

In western, and particularly German, theological literature the word 'Auschwitz' is one of the ways of referring to the genocide of European Jews in the Nazi period. The Jews call this event the *Catastrophe*, or in Hebrew *Shoah*, that is, 'Annihilation'. The most commonly used word is, however, 'Holocaust', which in Greek means 'total destruction by fire'. The word comes from the Ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, and means a kind of sacrifice involving the burning of the whole body of the sacrificed animal.

The meaning of the Biblical metaphor is clear enough. The writer Jean Améry, who survived concentration camp and spent his whole life thereafter attempting to come to terms with 'the necessity and the impossibility of being Jewish' (an attempt that came to an end with his suicide on 17 October 1978), wrote as follows: 'Although they were in the same abyss as us Jews, all the *Aryan* prisoners stood higher than us, they were light-years away from us . . . *the Jew was a sacrificial animal*. He had to drain the cup to the last bitter drop. I drained it. That was when I realised what it means to be a Jew.'

What is 'Christianity after Auschwitz'? What is the significance of the Auschwitz theme in contemporary Christian theology? We might formulate a preliminary approach to this theme as follows: 'It was not the Christians who annihilated the Jews, but the Nazis and their accomplices (although the majority of them were baptised and had been brought up in a Christian milieu, and some of them continued to consider themselves church members). But responsibility for the fact that the whole thing became possible lies on the Christians too.'

What kind of responsibility is envisaged here? In 1946 the famous German philosopher Karl Jaspers published a book entitled *Die Schuldfrage (The Problem of Guilt)*, in which he discussed the 'guilt of the Germans'; that is to say, the guilt of the German people for the crime against humanity perpetrated by the Nazis. This book was a significant event in the spiritual life of post-war Germany. One might expect a similar question to be asked here in the discussion about 'Christianity after Auschwitz'. But in fact we do not find that discussion of 'German guilt' is carried over to the religious and theological sphere: we find something more fundamental. In contemporary Christian theology – and not just German Christian theology – theologians are mostly talking not about the moral and political responsibility of Christians for the Holocaust, but about the very meaning of 'Christian' after the *Catastrophe*, about the very essence of Christianity in the face of the Holocaust.

The philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich (1886–1965), one of the most significant and creative Christian thinkers of our day, said that a Christian 'cannot now join the chorus of those who live in the world of unbroken assertions.' I would ask the reader to pay attention to these words: they will be important in our further discussion. Tillich had in mind not the Holocaust, but the contemporary crisis of confidence in all available systems claiming to understand the world, including Christianity. Nevertheless it is possible to use Tillich's words to express the basic significance of the concept 'Post-Auschwitz Theology': after the *Catastrophe*, a Christian can no longer live 'in the world of unbroken assertions'.

Why is it that the genocide of the Jews has evoked in Christians a crisis of confidence in the content of their own faith? Let us take a detailed look at this. But let me just say at the outset that western Christianity today would be just as dead as communism if this particular crisis had not come along, albeit greatly delayed. The very first Christian efforts to think through the Holocaust date back only to the late 1960s. So what we are talking about here is a direction in Christian thinking that is just *beginning* to develop under our very eyes. As late as 1968 the Jewish philosopher Emil Fackenheim was perfectly justified in saying that 'The Gentile world shuns Auschwitz because of the terror of Auschwitz – and because of real or imagined implication in the guilt for Auschwitz.'

Taking a historical view, I see three stages in coming to grips with this problem.

(1) Recognition by the Churches of their moral and political responsibility for the Holocaust. The point here is that after Hitler came to power the Churches – Protestant and Catholic, European and American – could have spoken out in defence of the Jews, but did not do so. We can see this kind of recognition of their own responsibility in, for example, the 'Resolution on Renewing Christian-Jewish Relations' adopted by the Rheinland Synod of the German Protestants in 1980.

(2) Christian theologians began to examine the centuries-old tradition of church anti-Judaism as one of the sources of contemporary racist antisemitism. The long history of church enmity towards the Jews has thus now begun to take on a new and ominous significance. So, for example, rules of the Lateran Council of 1215 about what arrangements should be made for Jews within a Christian society have turned out to be comparable with the racist legislation of the Nazis. The Council even decreed that Jews must wear a distinctive badge, like lepers and prostitutes. This anticipated the instruction of 1 September 1941 that Jews in the territories occupied by the Reich must sew yellow six-pointed stars onto their clothing.

Christians began to listen to witnesses who had survived the Holocaust. Here we should mention the name of Elie Wiesel who was sent to Auschwitz as a boy. Elie Wiesel became a world-famous writer and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, 'a messenger to all humanity', in the words of the famous Christian theologian Robert McAfee Brown, who wrote a book about his work. For Christians who had started to understand the issues at stake the voices of Jewish philosophers, theologians and historians who had written about the Holocaust also became important. We shall therefore pay attention to them as well.

Similarities between early Christian and medieval canon law on the one hand and Nazi legislation on the other were analysed in some detail by the Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg in his classic work *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Hilberg argues that the origin of the Nazis' 'final solution of the Jewish question' must be sought in Christian persecution of the Jews. Hilberg sees three types of anti-Jewish policy chronologically succeeding each other from the fourth century AD – from the time when Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire. These are: conversion to Christianity; expulsion (including expulsion into the ghetto); and annihilation. 'Christian missionaries', writes Hilberg,

used in effect to tell us: you have no right to live amongst us as Jews. The secular powers that succeeded them proclaimed: you have no right to live amongst us. Then finally the German Nazis ruled: you have no right to live . . . The whole process began, then, with an attempt to convert the Jews to Christianity by force. The next step was to expel these victims of persecution. The end-point of the process was reached when the Jews were

condemned to death. The Nazis, therefore, did not break with the past: they based themselves on it. It was not they who began the whole process: they merely brought it to completion.

At this stage Christian theologians start thinking for the first time about ‘anti-Judaism in the New Testament’. They discover the judaeophobic potential of the New Testament – a potential that has been fully realised in the history of the Church. Later I shall attempt to explain the basis for these ideas, which are unusual as far as Russian cultural consciousness is concerned.

(3) From the New Testament it is a natural step to the next and most profound level – to Christology, the heart of the meaning of Christianity: to Christian doctrine about Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah (Christ) and as the Son of God, and to the consequent universality of the claims of Christianity. The inner logic involved in a consideration of all these new problems has convinced some theologians that after Auschwitz the heart of the meaning of Christianity has to be presented in a different way.

In order to undertake this reassessment, honesty and a readiness for agonising efforts in reexamining all traditions will be needed. I believe that in order to undertake a thoroughgoing theological reconsideration of the Holocaust Christians will need courage – the courage to question the basics of their own world-view.

The German Lutheran theologian Friedrich Wilhelm Marquardt in 1979 put the necessity for a radical change in Christian thinking very succinctly:

Today Auschwitz bears down on us as a judgement on our Christianity, on the past and present pattern of our Christian being. Furthermore – looked at through the eyes of the victims of Auschwitz – it bears down on us as a judgement on Christianity itself. Moreover, Auschwitz bears down on us as a challenge to repentance and conversion. Not only our life must change, but also our faith itself. As a result of thinking through Auschwitz there must be not only ethical but also doctrinal consequences. Auschwitz challenges us to hear the Word of God today quite differently from the way it was conveyed to us by our theological teachers and preachers of older generations. This repentance and conversion affects the essence of Christianity as we have understood it hitherto.

## II

In order to comprehend why western Christians themselves came to the conclusion that such changes were necessary, and in order to see more clearly what it is that they want to change, I suggest that we examine a piece of writing which has recently become widely accessible, and which, I am sure, many readers will remember: N. A. Berdyayev’s article *Khristianstvo i antisemitizm*. One must bear in mind that this article is not one of Berdyayev’s little-known or forgotten works; on the contrary, it was always known to specialists and has been translated into other languages. The political orientation of the two Soviet journals which have published it – *Druzhba narodov* and *Ogonek* – suggest that they decided to use the writings of one of the most respected Russian philosophers as an ‘old but redoubtable weapon’ in the fight against growing antisemitism, the cultivation of which was also the starting point of our discussion.

This essay of Berdyayev on the religious fate of Jewry (that is its sub-title) permits us to see ‘the past pattern of our Christian being’ (F. W. Marquardt), that is, some

important aspects of the theology which in the era of Auschwitz even the most sensitive Christian thinkers put forward. Berdyayev wrote this essay at the beginning of 1938 as an attempt at a Christian response to the racist antisemitism of the German Nazis.

Our discussion is about western Christianity, and we could examine well-known works of the major western theologians written at the same time with the same purpose of giving a Christian basis for the fight against Nazi antisemitism. However, the series of ideas that we are concerned with now is expressed equally clearly by these theologians and by Berdyayev: after all, what we have here is a legacy of ideas that is common to the various Christian traditions. For us it is all the more important that we look at Berdyayev's work.

Reading this article today, in the post-Auschwitz era, when Jewish-Christian dialogue has begun, in which Christians are trying to look at themselves 'through the eyes of the victims of Auschwitz' (F. W. Marquardt) and are learning to listen to the voice of Jews, the historian of Christian thought will notice above all that Berdyayev, as the author of a treatise on the religious fate of Jewry, does not demonstrate an interest in the actual history of the Jews. It is not that Berdyayev did not know Jewish history and Jewish thought. He refers to Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber, to the mid-nineteenth century Jewish historian Salvador who wrote a life of Jesus of Nazareth, and to some episodes in Jewish history over the past twenty centuries. But Berdyayev does not think through the history of the Jews – 'what really happened' – because he was concerned instead with their religious fate, which on closer examination turns out to be an interpretation of the history of the Jews – an interpretation of necessity deriving from Christian teaching.

Thus, at the beginning of Berdyayev's article we come across a thesis on which the author bases his thinking as though it were something self-evident: 'The Jews are a people with a special, exceptional religious fate, God's chosen people, and this determines the tragedy of their historical fate. God's chosen people, from whom the Messiah came and who rejected the Messiah, cannot have a historical fate similar to the fate of other peoples.'

I do not propose that the reader should think about the meaning that these pious words about the inevitable tragedy of the fate of the Jews would have acquired had they been uttered on the brink of Babi Yar in Kiev three years after they were written – when at the end of September 1941 tens of thousands of Kiev Jews perished in the ravine. They were Berdyayev's countrymen, for he spent the first 24 years of his life in Kiev. I do not propose it, because they would not have acquired any new meaning. Babi Yar was simply a continuation of the 'historical fate' of the Jews, to which they were condemned by the Christian nations. The Nazis were not the first to engage in the mass extermination of Jews in Ukraine. Bohdan Khmel'nits'ky, one of the most terrible villains in the memory of the Jewish nation, was their precursor.

We would do better to reflect on the theological basis that Berdyayev gives for this fate: 'God's chosen people ... rejected the Messiah'. Accepting this thesis, Berdyayev develops the theme of Christian antisemitism:

Religious antisemitism in essence is anti-Judaism and anti-Talmudism. The Christian religion really is inimical to the Jewish religion in the form in which it crystallised after the failure to recognise Christ as the Messiah expected by the Jews. Judaism before Christ and Judaism after Christ are spiritually different phenomena.

Berdyayev accepts all these classic postulates of theological antisemitism as well.

Moreover, he agrees with the well-known accusation against the Jews of deicide and with the notion that the Jews bear a curse for this in their history:

The Jewish people cursed itself, it agreed that Christ's blood should be upon it and upon its children. It took the responsibility on itself . . . That is the accusation. But surely Jews were the first to acknowledge Christ? The apostles were Jews . . . The Jewish people cried 'crucify, crucify him'. But all peoples have an insuperable tendency to crucify their prophets, teachers and great people . . . And not only the Jews crucified Christ. Christians, or people calling themselves Christians, over the ages have been crucifying Christ by their deeds, including by their antisemitism.

Here Berdyayev repeats the ancient calumny against the Jews, which can be compared only with the blood slander, that is the accusation against the Jews of the ritual murder of non-Jews, which in the middle ages was often a pretext for mass persecution of the Jews.

What in fact do the words 'the Jews rejected Christ' mean? It is easy to satisfy oneself that the rejection of Christ, that is the conscious choice of the Jews not to recognise Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah, is a feature of the history not of the Jewish people but of Christian doctrine. It is generally accepted that Jesus was crucified on the orders of the Roman governor of Judaea in the year 30 AD. His followers in Palestine, the early Christian community, who were Jews who observed the Law, were not numerous and were perceived by those who knew of their existence as part of the Pharisaic movement. (The historian Josephus Flavius is witness to this.) The first half of the first century in Palestine was a time of growing political tension, of the partisan struggle of the zealots (proponents of a 'holy war' against Rome) against the Roman occupation, of the frequent replacement of the Roman governors and the local rulers dependent on the Romans, of a plethora of religio-political parties and movements and of the appearance of messianic pretenders, of whom Jesus of Nazareth was probably one. To sum up, the country was slowly sliding towards the Great Uprising of 66–73 AD. The defeat of the uprising, the destruction of the Temple, the loss by the people of the last vestiges of national statehood, the death or sale into slavery of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Jews – all this was the beginning of new epoch in the history of the Jewish people.

One should take into account that this period (up to the Uprising) was marked by the flourishing of religious creativity in the Jewish community, which sharply distinguishes the 'early Judaism' of that epoch from the classical Judaism which arose after the defeat of the anti-Roman uprising, when there began a consolidation around the Orthodoxy which was then at a formative stage. From the point of view of the historian, Jesus and his followers – just like, for example, John the Baptist and his followers – were one of the groups within the pluralist structure of early Judaism. Therefore the thesis repeated by Berdyayev that 'the Jewish people rejected the Messiah' has no historical meaning. In the history of the Jewish people there was simply no such event.

I do not intend to distract the reader by recounting Jewish history from the late first century to the third century. That would lead us too far from our primary theme of 'Christianity after Auschwitz'. I will just mention that not long before 120, when there was a danger that there would be a total ban on the practice of the Jewish religion, when the diaspora rose against the Romans and a new uprising in Palestine looked imminent, the Sanhedrin excommunicated the Jewish Christians from the community as unreliable members (one Jewish source calls them 'informers'). This

decision, however, was equally unimportant for the Jewish community and for the Church. By now gentile converts predominated in the Church and the decision went practically unnoticed. The important thing here is that the Church at a very early stage became Hellenised and grew through the conversion of gentiles, with the result that in real life in the second and third centuries the Jewish and Christian communities had very little contact with one another.

For the first time in their history the Jews as a community had the chance to 'reject Jesus Christ' only after Christianity became the state religion of the empire in the fourth century and the Church, backed by the power of the state, began to restrict the rights of Jews, in an attempt to force them to be baptised. This is the situation that I have already described in the words of Raul Hilberg.

But the most sinister role in the history of Christian persecution of the Jews was played by the accusation, accepted by Berdayev, that the Jews 'crucified Christ' and now bear a curse – collective responsibility for what became known as the crime of 'deicide'. The monstrous consequences of the tradition of the curse are such that after the Holocaust even the Catholic Church felt it necessary to distance itself from this tradition in a 1965 declaration of the Second Vatican Council:

True the Jewish leaders and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (John 19: 6); still what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all Jews then alive without distinction, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be regarded as rejected by God, or accursed, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures.

This half-hearted admission that the Council wrung out of itself with difficulty will help us to understand how the idea that 'the Jews rejected Christ' arose together with the notion of deicide and the curse.

Of course, our Holy Scriptures, the New Testament, contains elements of the teaching that 'the Jews are rejected and cursed by God'. The authors of the Declaration dodge the issue. But another thing is more interesting: the Council Declaration clearly indicates that this teaching is linked with another theological idea, which can also be traced back to the New Testament, the concept of the Church as 'the new people of God' or the new Israel.

The combination of these two sets of ideas explains a significant part of the New Testament's anti-Judaism and the Christian Judaeophobia that is based on it.

Let us imagine what the New Testament idea of the Church as God's new chosen people, the new Israel, might mean for the fate of the Jews. It could mean only one thing: the removal from the stage of history of the 'old Israel', now that it has fulfilled its role as the source of the one true teaching. Therefore the Christians called the Jewish Scriptures the Old Testament, a law no longer in force, juxtaposing its contents with the New Testament, the saving revelation of God in Christ, the new divine decree replacing the old one.

The idea of the 'new Israel' implies the Christian version of the history of salvation which already began to be formulated in the epistles of the apostle Paul (for example, the Epistle to the Romans, chapters 9–11) and in Luke's Gospel. The question is answered as to how former pagans became the new chosen people. Since the concept of a chosen people and the idea of a history of salvation are borrowed by Christians from the Jewish Bible the answer to this question must include a reference to the 'old' chosen people.

The answer can be summarised roughly as follows: God performed a saving act in



sending to men his Son, who 'became man' as a member of God's people Israel. The appearance of Christ is the decisive event in the history of salvation, that is, the history of what happened between God and man. The preparation for this event took place in the course of the preliminary stage of the history of salvation, that is to say the history of the relations between God and Israel described in the Old Testament. Every person who agreed with the truth of the message of salvation in Christ and met certain conditions became a member of the community of the 'saved', that is, of the Christian Church.

In terms of normal, secular history this corresponded to the fact that the Church recruited mainly gentiles, the Hellenised population of the Roman Empire, whose spiritual needs were satisfied by Christian teaching. And, in turn, as early as in Paul's time (the fifties of the first century) it was the Hellenic world on which Christian teaching patterned its development. This is the origin of the initial premises of Christian antisemitism, according to which 'the Jews rejected Christ, crucified Him and bear a perpetual curse for this'.

The Christians usurped the Jewish idea of history of salvation, which, as sacred history, embraced not only the whole of the past from the creation of Adam, but also the whole of the future, to the Last Days, when God will bring the world to an end. They ousted Israel from this history, replacing it with the Church and leaving the Jews a place only in the past. At the same time the Christians appropriated the whole Jewish Bible as the first part of the Christian Holy Scriptures, interpreting it as a collection of prophecies about Christ.

However, the real, that is to say the 'old', Israel was still alive, and for the time being the early Church had to reconcile itself to this fact, giving it a theological interpretation, with whose New Testament sources we are already acquainted. Thus there arose the myth of the bad Jews who rejected the Saviour and crucified him. But the death of Jesus, interpreted by the gentile converts as an atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, itself came to be considered the saving event. And at this point there arises the most sinister side of the myth of bad Jews: in Christian consciousness they became servants of the devil and enemies of God who deliberately killed the Saviour and thus, despite their intention, became the instrument of Providence. The Jews, to their misfortune, acquired a functionally important role in Christian myth. Thus in Matthew's Gospel we find the notion of the Church as the true Israel, in relation to which the promises of the Old Testament are fulfilled, and also the watchword of Christian antisemitism: 'Then answered all the people: his blood be on us and on our children' (27: 25). As for John's Gospel, it contains a text which became crucial for the Christian version of the idea of the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy: 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do' (8: 44). For John the 'Jews' in general and the 'pharisees' in particular are a symbol of lack of faith and spiritual blindness.

Now we can understand the meaning of Berdyayev's statements cited above, in particular: 'Judaism before Christ and Judaism after Christ are spiritually different phenomena.' It is also clear why Berdyayev describes Jewish consciousness at the time of the emergence of Christianity as 'ossified', although the historian's view would be the opposite: Jewish consciousness was very lively and was developing rapidly. Our philosopher simply reproduces the commonplaces of Christian tradition, which denied the positive worth of Judaism in the 'Christian' era. Historical data do not enter into this tradition and therefore play no perceptible role in Berdyayev's concept of the 'religious fate of Jewry'.

In the last part of his essay Berdyayev asks: 'Is there a solution to the Jewish

question within the confines of history?’ There is no clear answer in the essay, but now the reader can easily guess which outcome would have seemed the most appropriate to Berdyayev: the conversion of Jews to Christianity, of course. This is what he writes: ‘We live in an age not only of brutal antisemitism but also of an ever-increasing number of conversions of Jews to Christianity. . . . Religious antisemites can see the only solution to the Jewish question in the conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity. In my view there is a great deal of truth in this.’ Berdyayev’s further reasoning boils down to his insistence, in contrast to Christian antisemites, on the strict observance of the principle of voluntary choice in this matter. He does not consider ‘the pogrom to be natural. . . . in the event of Jews not agreeing to convert’.

Konstantin Leont’ev called the Christianity of Lev Tolstoy and Fedor Dostoyevsky ‘rosy’. On the basis of this essay Nikolai Berdyayev’s religious convictions could be described as ‘Christianity with a human face’, that is to say, ‘fidelity to tradition minus the pogrom’. Berdyayev supports this position with phrases which one now perceives as intolerable, pseudo-pious hypocrisy: ‘For the conversion of Jews to Christianity it is very important that Christians themselves should be converted to Christianity, that is to say, become not formal Christians, but real ones.’

What arguments does Berdyayev advance for the conviction expressed in his essay that Christianity is in fact incompatible with antisemitism and ‘antisemitism inevitably must reveal its anti-Christian nature’? Berdyayev gives two proofs. One of them is external: ‘German racism has completely non-Christian roots’. He has in mind the historical fact of the Nazis’ disdain for Christianity. The Christian proof proper boils down to reference to the Jewish roots of Christianity. We have already seen how an analysis of the ‘Jewish roots’ helps to explain the character of Christian Judaeophobia. But this reference can serve as an argument against antisemitism only on the emotional level, such as protestations about the Jewishness of Mary, Jesus and the apostles which the article begins with. History shows the total ineffectualness of such arguments and references to ‘common heritage’: unfortunately, they have never helped at all.

Of course, one of the prerequisites for Berdyayev’s reasoning is the notion of Christianity as the quintessence of everything that is exalted and beautiful. This notion can be seen in the many splendid maxims such as the following: ‘Those who hate and crucify cannot be called Christians, however many devotions they perform . . . Christians above all should defend truth . . . It is Christians who should defend the dignity of man and the value of the human personality regardless of race.’

Maybe that is so. However, it obviously did not occur to Berdyayev to think that a Jew, a member of the community of faith of Israel, might be of religious importance for him, Berdyayev, precisely because of his Jewishness and not as a potential convert.

In concluding my analysis of this piece I would like to assure the reader that I have not been trying to instill an unfavourable view of N. A. Berdyayev. It was from Berdyayev’s books that I, like many of my contemporaries who grew up in a non-religious environment, in my time acquired my first knowledge of Christianity and I shall always be grateful to him.

Let me repeat that what we are concerned with is, after all, the common property of Christian theology, what seemed obvious before Auschwitz. For instance, V. S. Solov’ev, the greatest of the Russian philosophers, well known for his love of Jewish people (Judaeophilia), who possessed immense knowledge in the fields of Jewish history and Talmudic tradition and who specifically defended the Talmud against antisemitic calumnies, nevertheless shared all these commonplaces which we have

examined using Berdyayev's essay as an example. The point is that after the Holocaust the very language of theology began to change.

The reference to Russian Christian writers in connection with our theme is also important because Auschwitz should not be for us a code-name evoking an image of the *gulag*. To create such cultural associations would in itself be vile, because every innocent victim is unique and should not become the basis for political speculation. Furthermore, we do not have the right to counterpose Auschwitz and the *gulag* on the principle of 'them and us'. After all, a significant part of the Holocaust took place on the territory of our country. Of six million Jews who were killed in the Holocaust one and a half million were citizens of the USSR in its pre-1939 borders. The Nazis could not have done this without help from the native population. As in all the occupied countries, the fate of the Jews was often in the hands of the national majority. Everybody knows how the Danes saved practically all their Jews. It is far less well known in our country that the native population in those parts of the USSR occupied by the Nazis actively participated in the extermination of the Jews. Yet historians even know of pogroms that the local population perpetrated after the retreat of the Red Army and before the Nazis arrived.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, in Israel names of 'righteous Gentiles' from our country are well known – those who saved Jews during the years of the Catastrophe.

### III

Up to this point I have attempted at least partially to explain the following: why during the Holocaust the Churches did not come to the defence of the Jews; why after the Holocaust Christians cannot live in the 'world of unbroken assertions', including dogmatic propositions about Jesus of Nazareth; why western theologians came to the conclusion that thinking through the Holocaust had to have doctrinal consequences for Christians. Now let us turn to the content of 'Post-Auschwitz Theology'.

Here are some of the possible directions such a review might take, as suggested to Christians by the Jewish theologian Emil Fackenheim, who wonders:

'... whether the changes in Christian attitudes towards Jews possess the radicalism which, after Auschwitz, is a categorical imperative ... The organised Christian forces will find it easiest to drop the ancient charge of deicide, harder to recognise roots of antisemitism in the New Testament, and hardest of all to face up to the fact that Jews and Judaism are both still alive. Confronted with an awkward fact of Jewish survival after the advent of Christianity, theologians have looked upon Judaism as a fossil, an anachronism, a shadow. It is not easy ... to recognise that both Jews and Judaism have maintained an unbroken existence throughout the entire Christian era.

Fackenheim's opinion conforms to what we noted in analysing Berdyayev's article. And now we can take a broader view of the question. For it is not a matter of surgery on 'sick' Christianity by excising inappropriate elements of doctrine, nor of unconditional capitulation, that is admitting that Christianity is fallacious and no longer capable of retransforming man. No, it is a matter of orientation in a world where there are no longer any unbroken assertions. In other words the task is the creative one of renewing the very roots of Christian identity.

This is what the Christian historian Robert Ericksen wrote about the old Christian identity which collapsed after the Holocaust:

Christianity has got so mixed up with a whole range of cultural factors that

it is no longer possible to extract it in a pure form. Christianity is German culture. Christianity is middle-class culture. Christianity is respect for authority. Christianity is for law and order. Christianity is on the side of 'positive' social groups in their struggle against anarchy. It is precisely this kind of view which led to very many Christians accepting the National Socialist movement as a religious renewal.

Thus we need a new concept of church – state relations, a new thinking through of the links between the 'Christian' and the 'national' and – most important of all – a new approach to the question of religious truth. If Christianity 'before Auschwitz' was incapable of acknowledging the independent value of Judaism, we must interpret this fact as an indication of the centrality of a new understanding of religious truth in 'post-Auschwitz theology'. It is a matter of the content of the Christian credo and of the issue linked with it of Christianity's universal claim to be the expression of the fullness of truth, and of its claim to exclude or limit the truth of other religions and world-views.

We shall return to this issue after a short description of the problem of 'the Christian and the national'. The 'pre-Auschwitz' theology of culture was dominated by the following postulate: Christianity forms the core of national culture's value. National culture has value to the extent that it is Christian culture.

In a more vulgar variant this correlation is reversed and Christianity is perceived as a part of national culture. On the practical level these concepts merge indistinguishably and we observe 'national-religious movements'. Here too 'Post-Auschwitz Theology' comes to the conclusion that the bankruptcy of Christianity in Nazi Germany in the face of the Holocaust puts into question the very possibility of combining the 'Christian' with the 'national'.

And now, using the words of Robert Ericksen that I quoted, I shall formulate the central question for the theological trend under review: after the Holocaust what might a 'Christianity extracted in a pure form' look like? Reflections on what is called 'Post-Auschwitz Theology' lead one to the following conclusion: it would be a Christianity that has elaborated its own political culture independent of the character of political regimes; a Christianity that has renounced any dependence on national values and traditions; finally, a Christianity that has relativised its own claim to be privy to absolute truth and has altered the missionary aims deriving from this claim. As we have seen, the latter is the most difficult to achieve. In this connection the famous Catholic theologian Johann-Baptist Metz asks:

Is Christianity willing and able – and if so to what extent – to acknowledge the messianic tradition of Judaism in its inalienable distinctiveness, to acknowledge its continuing messianic quality, and to do so without betraying or belittling the Christological mystery contained in Christianity?

I would formulate this question in a more general way: how can one with due seriousness relate to one's own truth and with the same seriousness accept the existence of 'alien' truths? Can pluralism mean something more than a means of peaceful coexistence in a world that is divided according to world-view? Is it possible for pluralism to become a positive value in Christianity itself, that is to say a Christian value?

#### IV

To answer this question I need to address the concept of faith. If faith is agreement

with the truth of a series of propositions then it is, of course, incompatible with doubt, which is implicit in a serious attitude to others' views. As they say, doubt destroys faith. But if, adopting the formula of Paul Tillich, we define faith as the state of being grasped by my ultimate concern, that is to say we understand faith as a way of existence, then doubt becomes an indispensable element of this faith. If faith as absolute surrender ('state of being grasped') is associated with risk (this is asserted in many traditions of Christian piety) then, as Tillich says, 'the doubt of a believer is the doubt of a man gripped by an ultimate aspiration with a concrete content.' This is an existential doubt, distinct from the methodological doubt of the scientist and the dogmatic doubt of the sceptic. Faith as absolute surrender includes courage – and therefore doubt – in itself. Doubt is a structural element of faith, not a mental state.

I should like to show that the concept of a faith that rejects its own universal claims, a concept that is connected with these reflections on 'Post-Auschwitz Theology', and also of course the understanding of God that corresponds to such a concept, is more 'devout' than an absolutist and 'non-pluralist' concept of faith. For it is easy to understand that a faith which includes risk and doubt in its structure implies a more 'exalted', more 'divine' God than a faith which lives 'in the world of unbroken assertions'. Indeed, faith deprived of the elements of risk and courage loses the character of faith and acquires the features of an ideology of unique truth. There occurs here a diminishing of God that is far from devout, bringing him down to the level of an idol.

In order to clarify my idea of pluralism as a value proper to Christianity, I shall turn to the differentiation of the 'ultimate' and the 'penultimate' which is traditional in western theological thought. Only the absoluteness of the Absolute is completely certain: it does not evoke doubt and is not associated with risk. This is a reality which is given to me as directly as my own 'I' (in other words being grasped by my ultimate concern). This is the sphere of the 'ultimate'. But acceptance of the concrete content of this absolute is an act of courage associated with risk.

The Christian may say: Jesus of Nazareth has become for me the content of my 'ultimate', the content of my ultimate concern. In him, in Jesus of Nazareth, God revealed to me all that is necessary for my life to be filled with meaning. The apostle Paul wrote (Galatians 2: 21): 'for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain'. For me the meaning of the Good News (Evangelium) is expressed in a similar conditional statement: 'If I do not take upon myself a degree of responsibility, if I avoid it, then Christ is dead in vain.'

There are words that are linked in our mind with the name of the German mystic Johann Scheffler (pseudonym Angelus Silesius): 'If I do not exist, then neither does God.' These words occur in the mystic traditions of various religions. The mystic tries to express what he has experienced: the essential being of God in some sense 'depends' on the essential being of man. And in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, in the article 'Philosophical anthropology', I happened to find words that touch on the same subject from the other side:

There is a surprising correspondence between the themes of the death of God and the death of man. [The 'theology of the death of God' was popular in the West in the 1960s – S.L.] It seems that this correspondence reveals a profound correlation between theology and anthropology . . . While in the past thought tried above all to prove the existence of God, the main difficulty for modern thought is to prove the existence of man.

I do not think it is necessary to explain in detail that the problem of the 'existence of

man' arises in a world where Auschwitz has happened.

So it is in my understanding of the Gospel: in Jesus God has done everything that depended on him. And now the meaning of the life and death of Christ depends on me. If I do not take upon myself the yoke of following Jesus, of whom the New Testament speaks, then he 'is dead in vain'.

That is my experience of interpreting the core of meaning of the Christian message. And this corresponds to the understanding of God as the One who can give me the strength to take up this yoke.

Such a theology and such a Christianity, of course, are not going to put forward an absolute claim to possess truth in all its fullness. I received this faith in the Church, but I cannot insist that others should 'believe' in it. I do not even feel the need to 'pass it on', that is, somehow to impose it.

My absolute and 'ultimate' is not binding on others. And this is where there is room for Christian pluralism.

### **Russian Orthodoxy and the New Patriotism**

In the first part of this work we discussed the way in which western Christians are thinking through the Holocaust and, in connection with this, the specifics of the Christian attitude to the 'Jewish question'. I tried to show that this seemingly particular theme allows us to see something important in the 'past and present pattern of our Christian being' and even forces us to reflect on the 'essence of Christianity as we have understood it hitherto' (F. W. Marquardt). But, of course, our main concern and the starting point of our discussion is the growth of aggressive nationalism and antisemitism in Russian society.

Here too the Jewish theme only appears to be a particular one. It is worth reflecting on the words of writer Boris Khazanov: 'Antisemitism is a universal school of evil.' Recently quite a lot has been said about the similarity between the ideology of modern Russian nationalism and German fascism. For the Nazis antisemitism was something far more important than simply one of the points of their programme. The division of humanity into 'Aryans' and 'non-Aryans' (by which was meant primarily Jews) was the core of their racist mythology. Emil Fackenheim writes:

Jews in Auschwitz were not a species of the genus 'inferior race' but rather the prototype by which 'inferior race' was defined. Not until the Nazi revolution had become an anti-Jewish revolution did it begin to succeed as a movement, and when all its other goals came crashing down, only one of its goals remained: the murder of the Jews.

In speaking of the similarity of these two forms of aggressive nationalism I propose to keep to a historical approach to them; therefore I am not trying to suggest to the reader that they are identical. The type of nationalism which is strongly associated with our present political life under the name of '*Pamyat*' Patriotic Association' arose in conditions that are only remotely reminiscent of Germany after the First World War. And, of course, the crass parallels and the discovery of real similarities do not replace historical analysis.

On the basis of what I have already said, and following the structure of the first part of this work, I shall attempt to give a brief outline of my understanding of 'the new patriotism' (I shall use the term 'patriots' for participants in movements like *Pamyat* because they have themselves adopted it). Then, and for me this is the most important, I shall analyse Orthodox assessments of this movement. I consider these assessments

to be typical. I hope that this approach will allow us to see some of the significant features of modern Russian Orthodoxy.

### I

The new patriotism is often likened to the Black Hundreds, a proto-Nazi racist nationalism that came to the surface of Russian political life at the very beginning of the twentieth century and was very active in the period of democratic reforms that began in 1905. Subsequently this brand of Russian nationalism developed in the emigration: in the Far East there was even a Russian fascist party based in Harbin. The historical link between the Black Hundreds and the new patriotism is indisputable (for example, the one movement inherited from the other the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*), but the features of continuity should not overshadow the specifics of the new patriotism.

We shall try to identify those specific features of the new patriotism which are conditioned by its appearance within the communist bloc. I offer a twin proposition about these specifics:

- 1 The content of the ideology of the new patriotism is drawn mainly from racist thought, whether Russian, German or generally west European (for example, the English and French racist theories of the last century).
- 2 The structure of the new nationalist ideology is largely determined by the structure of the communist ideology which until recently had an almost complete monopoly in our country.

We ought to define what we mean here by communist form of society and communist ideology. But that would take us on a tangent, as there is no satisfactory definition of these concepts. Therefore I shall simply highlight those features of communist ideology that are significant for our theme.

As structural characteristics of communist ideology I have in mind totalitarianism and dualism. Totalitarianism is the ideology's claim to give answers to all questions of human existence, to encompass everything, leaving no open questions. Dualism is the sharp definition of light and dark poles, an image of social reality that is polarised into 'us and them', 'friends and enemies', 'progressive mankind and the forces of reaction'.

One can say that communism in Russia moulded the mass political culture within which the nationalism of *Pamyat'* arose. For if we regard communism and racism as pseudo-scientific doctrines which arose in Europe in the nineteenth century and became mass ideologies in the twentieth, then we have to note their common feature: their anti-liberal inspiration, their common opposition to liberal values.

In the new patriotism, just as in communism, there is a totalitarianism that is a response to the need for a simple and all-embracing interpretation of social experience. As for dualism, modern nationalism considers the dark pole, the source of all evil, to be the 'Zionists', who have conspired to seize power throughout the world. I think they are now talking seriously, and not euphemistically, precisely of a 'Zionist' conspiracy and not simply of a 'Jewish' or 'Jewish-Masonic' one. The fact that it is 'Zionism' that has become the key word for designating the enemy in the ideology of the new patriotism is a result of the influence of official anti-Zionist propaganda and of the mythical image of Zionism created by it.

Thus we see that for modern Russian nationalism the 'Jewish question' is not a mere detail. Here too racist antisemitism in the form of anti-Zionist myth forms the very centre of the programme. One is reminded of Hegel's famous aphorism in the

introduction to his *Philosophy of History*: 'The only practical lesson of history is that it never taught anybody anything.'

Of course, one would like to hope that history will nevertheless teach something to the supporters of the 'new patriotism'. But the history of Auschwitz and the history of the *gulag* ought to teach us simple people, the person in the street who has no love for any 'isms', that the most terrible thing about inhuman ideologies is the way they divide reality into Absolute Good and Absolute Evil, then identify Evil with some form of human society, and finally propose a 'final solution' to the problems of Evil, an attempt to exterminate those people whom the ideology has shown to embody the principle of darkness.

## II

I have before me two pieces whose authors are trying to give a critical analysis of aggressive Russian nationalism from an Orthodox point of view. They are the article by Gleb Anishchenko, 'Kto vinovat?' (*Glasnost*, no. 15, February 1988), and the open letter from Viktor Aksyuchits to Vladimir Osipov, editor of the journal *Zemlya* (*Glasnost*, no. 18, April 1988). We are justified in examining these two pieces together. Aksyuchits writes: 'On the whole my attitude to *Pamyat*' coincides with the opinion of my copublisher of the journal *Vybor*, Gleb Anishchenko.'

The authors of both pieces reproduce the postulate discussed in the first part of this work that Christianity is the core of a national culture's value and national culture has value to the extent to which it is Christian culture. We have seen that after Auschwitz this postulate was questioned by western Christian thought. Furthermore, in the course of the great reassessment of values which began in the post-Auschwitz era Christian theologians began to doubt the very possibility of combining the 'Christian' with the 'national'. Yet, despite the historical catastrophe endured by our nation, a similar movement has not emerged in Russian Christianity.

In Anishchenko's opinion 'for the affirmation of the Christian understanding of the world (and this is the basis of Russian national consciousness) it is necessary to strive to find a positive, pacifying solution of problems and not to inflame enmity and malice or to encourage national irresponsibility.' Aksyuchits believes that 'among the things destroyed in our country patriotic consciousness was particularly badly affected – for decades it was burnt out of our souls. *It is natural that it cannot be revived smoothly*' (emphasis added).

Reflecting on these attempts at a Christian critique of modern Russian nationalism I noticed two particular features.

(1) The Christian view of the problem is implicitly identified with the ideological position which I would call 'classical nationalistic anti-communism', an ideology that is hostile not only to communism but also to liberalism. This ideology arose in the first post-revolutionary emigration. Within Russia it was propagated in the publicistic work of A. Solzhenitsyn, I. Shafarevich, D. Dudko and others (for the first time in a comprehensive form in the collection *From under the Rubble* in 1974). Orthodoxy forms an indispensable component: according to this ideology a 'godless' person cannot become a fully fledged anti-communist.

This nationalistic anti-communism acquired almost canonical authority in the consciousness of many politicised Orthodox of the younger generation. In 1986 one respondent to a *samizdat* questionnaire on contemporary Orthodoxy advised doubters 'to read through Solzhenitsyn's splendid *Obrazovanshchina* as often as possible, or better still to learn it by heart'.



Anishchenko's starting-point is what is for him self-evident, 'the fact that parallel with the spiritual destruction of the Russian nation there was another process: the development of Russophobia'. 'I shall not dwell,' he says, 'on an analysis of Russophobia: that can be found in A. Solzhenitsyn's *Nashi plyuralisty* and I. Shafarevich's *Rusofobiya*. I shall only add that Aksyuchits in his article "Iz glubiny" shows very precisely the organic link between love of communism and Russophobia.'

Thus, the supporters of the ideology of nationalistic anti-communism, for whose personal identity adherence to the Russian Orthodox Church is more important than anything else (among them Aksyuchits and Anishchenko, the publishers of *Vybor*, the journal of Russian Christian culture), base their evaluation of the 'new patriotism' on a number of political and historiosophical propositions, whose truth, as far as one can judge, they have not themselves verified. These propositions are taken on faith and, consequently, are now considered a part of Russian Christian culture.

(2) The world-view of the Christian critics of aggressive nationalism has a great deal in common with the ideology which is the object of their criticism. Anishchenko writes:

If *sobornost'*, stripped of its religious basis, is transformed into herd instinct, then likewise 'universal sympathy', torn from its Orthodox roots, provides the prerequisites for communist 'Internationalism' and cosmopolitanism. The process of castration of Russian national consciousness has been going on for the whole of the past seventy years.

According to Anishchenko, this should be the point of view of the true Christian, for whom Russian culture is dear only because, in the opinion of this same author, it is 'based on a higher truth – Christian ideals'. Anishchenko concedes that '*Pamyat'* has posed the question of the destruction of Russian culture in a radical and honest manner.'

Aksyuchits gives the same assessment of the 'new patriotism': 'I am glad that through *Pamyat'* people began to talk out loud for the first time about many of our vitally important problems. . . . I believe that notions in some circles of the capital's intelligentsia about the dangers emanating from the *Pamyat'* society are greatly exaggerated.' Aksyuchits reproaches the authors of the *Pamyat'* appeal of 8 December 1987 for 'not wanting to reach some of the conclusions arising from the premises they themselves have put forward.'

Thus *Pamyat'* and its Orthodox critics share a love for Russian culture and a striving to 'restore national self-awareness'. Anishchenko and Aksyuchits reproach the ideologists of *Pamyat'* for not being sufficiently anti-communist and for incorrectly understanding Christianity. Anishchenko explains:

History has shown that a nation's culture will not be saved by renovated church buildings, and may not be saved even by those where services are taking place. A nation's self-awareness depends on the spirit which reigns in the Church. The only antipode to the existing ideology is Christianity. If one were to succeed in removing the Christian core from Russian culture it would cease to be in direct contradiction to communist ideals.

All this reminds me of an incident in the history of Christian apologetics which is scarcely known to the Russian reader. In October 1930 Alfred Rosenberg published an anti-Christian, anti-liberal and anti-Jewish book, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*. In January 1934 Adolf Hitler appointed Rosenberg his 'plenipotentiary for ideological work in the party'. *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* was

transformed from the work of a private individual into virtually an official expression of Nazi ideology. And then the theologians of the German Protestant (Lutheran) Church felt obliged to respond to Rosenberg's *Mythus*. Thus, the following books appeared: Walter Künneth's *Antwort auf den Mythus: die Entscheidung zwischen dem nordischen Mythus und dem biblischen Christus* (Berlin 1935); Rudolf Homann's *Der Mythus und das Evangelium* (Witten 1935); Heinrich Hüffmeier's *Evangelische Antwort auf Rosenbergs Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin 1934); and others. I mention them because today's reader of these works critical of Nazi mythology written in the mid-thirties will notice above all similarities between the positions of the Protestant theologians and those of Rosenberg, whom they are criticising. Künneth tries to prove that the Christian has a deeper understanding of German national and racial values than Rosenberg: only the Christian Revelation allows the recognition of Race, Nation and State as aspects of the created order, rooted in God's protective will. According to *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* the Germanic race has always opposed the pernicious influence of the Jewish 'counter-race'. Contesting Rosenberg's racist arguments about the Old Testament from a Christian perspective, Künneth adds: 'The perniciousness of today's "world Jewry" is a consequence of the curse hanging over the Jews since they crucified Christ. Rosenberg, by rejecting Christianity, is unable to grasp this most fundamental source of the racial animosity that he describes.'

In the mid-1930s the German theologians did not yet realise that National Socialism was a totalitarian ideology (in the sense outlined above) and that therefore one must not use its language: one can use it only to express concepts that belong to the ideology. The failure to realise this is explained by historico-cultural causes: the basic similarity of positions that I have already mentioned (to be more precise a number of shared propositions accepted on faith) did not allow Rosenberg's Christian opponents to find the perspective necessary for a consistent and profound criticism of National Socialism. Such a perspective must be outside the object of criticism, that is it must be if not 'above' at least somewhere 'to one side'. But the Protestant Christians at that time felt themselves to be within the rapid upsurge of national life.

Thus, the failure to realise at that time (the first half of the 1930s) that the Christian Church does not have the right to flirt with the 'national idea' has a historical explanation. As Karl Barth, the greatest Protestant theologian of our century and a consistent enemy of Nazism, wrote:

in Germany there were many reasons to favour this new combination [of Christianity with the national idea], especially for German Lutheranism . . . It was able to become a powerful torrent in which the hitherto divided streams of German church history would be united . . . It seemed that like a tidal wave it would refloat the ship of the Church that had run aground and finally carry it out onto the open sea of national life.

This delusion is just as explicable as Berdyayev's unsuccessful attempt to oppose racist antisemitism by using the traditional Christian image of Judaism and the Jews.

Yet what the catastrophes of our century have done is demonstrate the incompatibility of those views and ideologies which formerly seemed compatible (for example the 'union' of the liberal tradition with nationalism: many political doctrines of the nineteenth century were based on this combination). There occurred a great division in the world of ideas. Thoughts which were once the opinion of an insignificant minority became obvious truths. And, conversely, it became impossible to repeat what once had been perceived as a commonplace. The Catholic theologian

J.-B. Metz writes: 'I give my students an apparently simple but very strict criterion for assessing theological systems. Ask yourselves: was the theology which you are studying able to remain the same before and after Auschwitz? If it was, keep clear of it!'

Today the failure to realise this kind of thing has become unforgivable.

### III

This division, clarification and purification has not affected us. This is why modern Orthodox responses to the inhuman myth of Russian nationalism display the absence of any perspective that would be adequate to the task of real critical analysis. Orthodox criticism cannot come to grips with the whole subject, it lacks depth. For, as we have seen, it does not have its own semantic position. In the present instance this means that it does not have an independently elaborated understanding of Christianity: an understanding incorporating the experience of our historical catastrophe; an understanding arising from reflections on why in 1917 the country was 'not saved by churches where services were taking place,' in other words on why Russian Orthodoxy was bankrupt in the face of Bolshevism, why the Russian Orthodox Church was not equal to the challenge of taking on the spiritual leadership of the nation.

After all, it is not just that the authors of the works we have analysed, like many other contemporary Orthodox writers, are unable and unwilling to separate the Christian and the national, and not just that they seemingly consider as a classic of contemporary Christian thought Shafarevich's *Rusofobiya*, which contains a new version of the myth of the world Jewish conspiracy and of the Russian people as the victim of this conspiracy (as we have seen, this is the fundamental myth of the 'new patriotism'). Worse than this is that the cultural matrix which gives rise to such comments remains unchanged: the pattern of our Christian being is still just as it used to be (F. W. Marquardt).

Russian Orthodoxy continues to live 'in the world of unbroken assertions' which collapsed under the blows of twentieth-century history. The task of purification, that is of critical analysis of tradition, has not even been placed on the agenda. On the contrary, every effort is being made to preserve the integrity of Orthodox tradition, every element of which is acknowledged to be valuable and important. Therefore we see in Russia today the revival of that very same Orthodoxy which failed the test and in many respects has already shown itself to be bankrupt.

I think that our Orthodox Christianity has lost the character of the Evangelium, that is the joyous message, the 'good news'. Instead, it has become the 'core of Russian culture'. The fabric of our Orthodoxy is woven of distinctive political, national and spiritual urges. Something very simple has happened: after the new forms of self-understanding (for example, 'communist internationalism') were smashed, the previous forms of mass consciousness, which had almost been squeezed out, have begun to return: the 'religious' and the 'national'. There was no need to go far to find an ideal: it was to hand and ready to use. But the degree to which this ideal (or rather, this ideology) is closed and impenetrable is only gradually being discovered in the 'living religious experience' of which we have always written and spoken so fondly. The 'religious' and the 'national' in our Orthodoxy have merged to such an extent that it is impossible to 'isolate the Christian basis in its pure form' and anyway nobody is even trying.

It is natural that such an Orthodoxy gives no real basis for opposing the racist

antisemitism of the 'new patriots'. Indeed, mythopoeic nationalism proclaims: 'Zionism has openly gone over to the attack on the patriotic front!' (*Appeal* of the Council of the *Pamyat*' Patriotic Association of 1 February 1988). And Gleb Anishchenko explains that 'the answer offered by *Pamyat*' to the question "Who is to blame?" is by no means a fiction. At its basis there is a very real and serious matter – the problem of the dramatic (if not tragic) relations between the Russian and Jewish peoples *in Russian history and in Russian life* (emphasis added). How reminiscent this is of Lutheran theologian W. Künneth's response to the myth of the antagonism of the Aryan and Jewish races 'in German history and German life'.

The most that one can expect of Orthodox theologians and publicists in opposing antisemitism is the repetition of the propositions that Berdyayev used:

- Christianity is extra-national and personalist;
- 'antisemitism is contrary to the Gospel of Christ which is addressed to all people without any racial discrimination' (these words are from a *Declaration* by several Russian Orthodox theologians from abroad on the growth of antisemitism in Russia published in April 1990);
- the Epistle of Paul to the Romans provided a normative Christian interpretation of Judiasm coexisting with the Church (the status of the Jews as the chosen people is not abolished, merely suspended in order to make room for the Gentiles; at the end of time 'all Israel will be saved');
- let us not talk about the Jews' guilt for the death of the Saviour; we would do better to give some thought to the fact that we ourselves crucify him daily by our sins.

This is everything, or nearly everything, that can be said by Orthodox Christians who are alarmed that 'some people and groups combine Orthodoxy with antisemitism' (from the *Declaration* of Orthodox theologians). This applies also to the recent polemical comments by Zoya Krakhmal'nikova about Shafarevich's *Rusofobiya*.<sup>2</sup>

We know that this kind of theology allowed the Church to remain silent during all those years in which the Nazis annihilated six million. And the Russian Orthodox Church is silent today, although her members abroad know that 'even today the horror of the annihilation of the Jews during the Second World War hangs over the world'.

I am afraid that she will not break her silence: she has nothing to say in defence of the Jews.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> On pogroms in Lithuania see Dov Levin, 'On the relations between the Baltic peoples and their Jewish neighbours before, during and after World War II', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1990), pp. 53–66. On the pogrom in L'vov (L'viv) see: S. Redlich, 'Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, Ukrainians and Jews during and after the Holocaust', *ibid.*, pp. 39–51. On the participation of Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Belorussians in the genocide of Jews in Nazi-occupied territory see also Nora Levin's fundamental monograph on the Holocaust: *The Holocaust: the Destruction of European Jewry 1933–1945* (New York, 1973), pp. 247 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See the article in this issue of *RSS*, pp. 7–28.

**Can Christian Universalism Overcome Antisemitism?  
Two Reactions to the Articles by Lezov and  
Krakhmal'nikova**