

Beyond the Deceptions of Mundanity: The Christian Anarchist Thought of St. Valentin Svetsitsky

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Russian history is typified greatly by the constant war between the Christian monarchy and oligarchy. These are polar opposites. The first is dedicated to the common good, “rules” as a symbolic representation of custom and the Orthodox life and is not identical with the “state” which is a necessary evil. Christian monarchy is a religious rather than a legal institution.

On the other hand, the common good is fought by private goods: oligarchy and the materialization and brutalization of social life. During the worst years of Jesuit-Jewish repression in Ukraine, the Athonite elder Ivan Vysenskyj forcefully restated the National-Anarchist teaching that would be revived later by the Old Believers, Nepluyev and St. Andrei of Ufa. Ignored in the west (and for clearly good reason), Monk Ivan mocked and verbally assaulted the oligarchy in all its forms and guises.

The true church does not rule; it is the truth on earth. Social monasticism is the asceticism of the everyday the de-materialization of social life where prosperity is not measured on quantitative terms and economic growth is seen as much as a destructive force as well as a productive one. Moral purity is the only claim to property,¹ not contract. Apostasy is not just the renunciation of doctrine, but the renunciation of moral behavior as well. Behavior and doctrine are the same object seen from two different points of view. Parasitic behavior derives from false doctrine and vice versa – the prophetic ideal of the Old Testament said the same. As with the prophets of the Old Testament, injustice is identical with parasitism: to reap where one has not sown. Class rule is the result of rents, not economic innovation or the normal satisfaction of basic social needs.

I.

Under Tsar Nicholas II, incomes rose massively while prices remained the same. For the average urban worker, the year contained 100-110 non-working days. As Dostoevsky described in *The Possessed*, prosperity is inconsistent with the revolution – success meant a lack of violence impetus. The “pogroms,” such as they were, were instigated by the Jewish People's Will organization. Terrorist cells murdered roughly 10,000 a year between the death of Alexander III and the start of the war.

Historians writing in Russian such as Oleg Mihailov suggest that Alexander III defeated the revolutionaries because of his social legislation as well as the immense growth of the economy. Taxes were high only on higher incomes. Tax arrears from redemption payments were canceled.

When the Reds took over Russia and created the monstrous “Soviet Union,” the mask of being concerned for “workers and peasants” quickly came off. Playing on the universal

¹ Typically, “property” in English does not mean what it meant in 19th century Europe. When Proudhon or Marx spoke of “private property” they spoke of productive capital, not personal possessions.

ignorance of the west, Trotsky, Lenin and Stalin, with millions of dollars in western capital, aid and loans, build what amounted to a transmission belt to remove the labor of the workers to the party.

In 1937, the NKVD was at 1 million active duty personnel. Contrary to academic historiography, the Civil War did not end in 1921, but at the earliest 1929, with guerrilla flare-ups constant in scattered parts of the empire. The Party required constant tension and warfare. Trotsky's infamous "permanent revolution" was an expression of this fact.

Try to find a single major initiative that improved the lives of Soviet workers. There are none. Russians were worked to death. All socialist projects were destroyed upon the Reds coming to power. The peasant commune was destroyed. All the labor legislation from the era of Alexander III was repealed. Wages were near starvation under the Trotsky regime while all capital was in the hands of the party. When the system began to totter, the west bailed the Soviet Union out over and over again. Occasionally, "sanctions" were placed on the Soviet Union, to be overtly circumvented. Trade between the US and the USSR was always a major part of the "socialist paradise." The Library of Congress states:

For a variety of reasons -- compassion for the sufferings of the Soviet peoples, sympathy for the great "socialist experiment," but primarily for the pursuit of profit -- Western businessmen and diplomats began opening contacts with the Soviet Union. Among these persons were Averell Harriman, Armand Hammer, and Henry Ford, who sold tractors to the Soviet Union. Such endeavors facilitated commercial ties between the Soviet Union and the United States, establishing the basis for further cooperation, dialogue, and diplomatic relations between the two countries. This era of cooperation was never solidly established, however, and it diminished as Joseph Stalin attempted to eradicate vestiges of capitalism and to make the Soviet Union economically self-sufficient (Zich and Ellis, 1993).

A few comments on this passage. First, there was a deep-seated distrust of all things Russian in the west. There was nothing special about the USSR. The US did not "distrust" the USSR for being "Marxist," it distrusted it for being (superficially) Russian. Second, few, if any, in the United States could define "Bolshevism." Ideology was not a concern. As always, the only time ideology mattered was when Russia sought to build alliances independent of the US. Nationalism, not socialism, was the sole enemy of capital.

Third, while rhetorical sanctions were occasionally placed on the USSR, these had few teeth. Trade with the USSR was not an important part of American trade in general, but it was for the Soviets. Fourth, who would businessmen in the west have "sympathy for the 'great socialist experiment'?"

The sheer amount of western aid, trade and investment in the USSR from the US and NATO has been understated. While no detail can be given here, Anthony Sutton's *Wall Street and the Bolshevik Revolution* gives a listing of all investments from western capital in the USSR from primary sources. There was not a single area of heavy industry that was not built by the west. Stalin sought "economic self sufficiency only after the initial investments and skills were given.

II.

This essay is a summary of the thought of St. Valentin Sventsitsky. He is extraordinary in

that he laid out a coherent social and political conception of the Orthodox church at the time when all was in flux. As always, the Old Testament prophets need to be first consulted since their entire purpose was the building of a just social order. That they are included in the canon of scripture proves that Christianity is inherently political and economic. It has a strong and detailed social ideal that cannot be ignored.

He was a new martyr in that he was a supporter of the True Orthodox movement of St. Joseph of Petrograd. For his rejection of Metropolitan Sergius' infamous epistle, he was arrested on May 19 1928 and was exiled to the Irkutsk region of Siberia. This caused health problems and, starting in 1930, an infection was discovered in his liver. The regime refused him all medical treatment and he died on November 9 1931. his body remains in corrupt.

St. Valentin was a Christian Socialist. This is why his political work is almost never mentioned in English and his works on the subject have been actively suppressed by the ROCOR and other Orthodox bodies in the west.

Sobornost' is a word often used among Orthodox the world over. Understanding it is a matter of experience and intuition. St. Valentin understood the term as the fluidity of the church, an organic network of roles, ideas, institutions and actions that all partook of the singular and uncreated grace that Christ made real at Pentecost. Valentin realized a truth that even today, many refuse to countenance: there is no real culture such that elders and saints can emerge. Oligarchy and corruption are considered "normal" and thus, to act as a Christian is to appear insane.

"Usury" for Valentin is a broad term. He uses it to refer to "rents" in general and, like Fr. Ivan Vysenskyj, sees parasitism and the essence of injustice.

The main Christian perception of the world is that of a single, integral whole organism. The organism is a history of struggle that generates its internal development. There is no spatial nor temporal separation. Such distinctions are only the external manifestation of internal fragmentation, generating suffering and death, but in the world process seeking its universal unity (Sventitsky, Vol II, 246-267) .

The fall of man removed the innocent, intuitive perception of the world. This created the need for concepts and language as the relation between man and creation became hostile; one of mutual estrangement. He clarifies,

What is progress?

In contrast to the conventional view of progress as a gradual attainment of the universal, earthly well-being, Christianity does not see this as a quantitative concept. Progress is a slow and painful differentiation between good and evil, the gradual differentiation of mixed and disparate elements that slowly become irreconcilable. On the one hand, Christ will reunite matter with the divine principle, ready to restore harmony; on the other hand, the scattered, self-asserting atoms will be led by Antichrist.

Universal happiness on this earth is impossible. The last days of world history are described in the Gospel as the days of unprecedented catastrophe. Hardening of hearts to the point of pathology as nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom and earth will see affliction, such as has never been seen. . .

Christianity teaches the victory of Good, that self-assertion will not stand. . .
(ibid)

Progress is the reestablishment of sobornost of all creation, man and its relationship to the creator. Failures, suffering and dislocation make the need for this re-connection clearer and methods more relevant. What is Progress then?

Progress is not the gradual evolutionary unfolding of the Kingdom of God on earth. The Gospel casts down all these human dreams. The last century was one of unprecedented tribulation, the last few were worse, the days of world catastrophe. Progress is not a continuous line, and positing such a line is illusory. Progress is the greater and more detailed differentiation between good and evil. . . The end of history - the final fight of Christ and Antichrist (ibid).

In other words, the confrontation between good and evil, or that between the Will of God and the Will to Power, becomes sharper over time. Karl Marx speaks of history being the arena – among other things – where the number of classes steadily shrinks. Capitalism is the last gasp of this, having only two classes. Having only two makes the confrontation more obvious and sharp.

The purpose of the entire world process is the embodiment of the divine idea in the world. The soul of the world, the beginning, connecting everything with its divine absolute beginning, has now been severed from the Divine and has created a chaos of disparate elements. . . The purpose of existence is the connection of the world with the divine. The “world soul” is all those transient and fragmented elements that come to be called “nature.” Clearly, this unity can become real only under the condition that it is absolute, but it can be absolute when it is a free union of nature and God (ibid)

Christ is two natures united in a voluntary bond. It is “voluntary” in that they each have their own will. God does not force himself on man. The fact that his human nature has its own will means that it can fall away at any time, it is not forced to follow God's law. The same occurs in society. As Christ is the perfect unity of both natures within a single hypostasis (that is, in a single person) all of reality is commanded to develop the same. This is the purpose of history.

Finally, he defines the conception in more detail:

Everything that happens on earth – war, the emergence of states and cities, the birth and death of people – is part of the great struggle between good and evil. All the changes that we see, all phenomena, from handheld machines to steam engines to new styles of our clothes – everything is the result of a constant struggle between good and evil. No act of evil, no sinful thought passes without a trace. All serve to strengthen the good or to strengthen evil. Therefore, good and evil are developing equally and, over those thousands of years, each, little by little, is getting stronger, each in its own way. The confrontation continues to sharpen. The Gospel speaks of the last times. These are not happy times in the least. They are a terrible, unprecedented display of evil before its last, final struggle with goodness. All evil will unite around one person, the person of the

Antichrist, the Beast, and stand against the light, against God (Letters, Vol II, 606-612)

The point is clear: history is the elimination of the detail and ambiguity between the two Wills, one to power and the other God's. The conception of Antichrist being a single person (or an entity that acts like one) is that the dichotomy becomes so sharp and clear that only a single individual can properly manifest it.

Russia, that is, Orthodox Russia has the historical role of being the manifestation of the Orthodox Church, the summation of all earthly goods in her grace-filled mysteries. Her human element is flawed, something Valentin never tires of mentioning. This should not blind us to the fact that the church is as close as the Holy Spirit gets to having its own hypostasis. She is pure as to faith and doctrine. All of Eden is reconstituted on earth in God's church, yet her members are unable to properly control their ego in order to see it.

The Program of the Brotherhood is the most comprehensive vision of St. Valentine's social ideas. It is overtly anarchist, as we read in section 2 of part 5:

Any power of one man over another, resting on any external rank such as wealth, origin, tradition or external authority, from a Christian point of view, is undoubtedly unacceptable and therefore must, in the church, be abolished.

Anarchy is our Christian ideal.² The relationship among community members should be determined solely by internal criteria laid down by the Holy Spirit as each is gifted with different abilities.

In this way within our communities we must eliminate all the dark consequences of public life. You must destroy the courts and prisons, and reject any participation in the war. Our life in Russia means the faithful will perform only those requirements which are not contrary to our faith, and therefore they should always and unconditionally refuse to perform military service.

All the affairs of the community should be based on the elective principle. In elections we realize the main feature of community life – communion (общение). The clergy will be elected at all levels (The Struggle of the Christian Brotherhood and Our Program, 1905, 584-594).

Economically speaking, his 1905 program rejects all private property and seeks a progressive income tax. All state land should pass into the local rural communities or their regional associations. Workers should control their industries. Labor protections, including a minimum wage and an 8 hour day are also demanded.

The purpose of the Christian life is freedom, one that can only be granted by grace through the Holy Spirit. He rejects the libertarian, “negative” concept of freedom and says:

The Christian idea of freedom is quite different. She is not only an external condition, but also the inner content. This inner content is necessary to distinguish between the two sides, firstly, what is commonly understood by freedom of will - the freedom of choice. Will is regarded not as a passive transmitter endless chain of causal relations, but enclosing a special property of being the root cause. It is not only the object of the action at her best, but she

2 В христианских общинах должен быть осуществлён полный идеал безвластия.

freely, defines himself (Vol II, 162-188).

Freedom is autonomy, not arbitrary choice. It is common among moderns to see freedom as an act unfettered by external cause and, because of that, it has the property of being free. However, a free act can only exist through deliberation. The act is free because the agent wills it knowledge from an array of other options. Something that is done out of impulse, habit or during sleep is not free for this reason.

Unfreedom is the rule of passion. Things might be It is “choice” perverted by heteronomy. The drives to money and power are unfree. The spirit alone is autonomous. External situations that restrict one's free choice are clear enough. What is less obvious are the internal drives that lead to unfree acts. In the political realm, for example, he distinguishes what delineates free from unfree acts:

Christians can and should deal with economic oppression by violence such as strikes and so on. However, they should not do this the sake of some personal passion such as dreams of a decadent and luxurious life, as is often done now and in the name of Christ but needs to be done from the foundation of freedom from these heteronomous drives (Letters, Vol II, 606-612).

The Russian commune is the specifically Christian Socialist and Christian Anarchist alternative to modernity. The “Mystic Anarchist” idea appealed to Christians and non-Christians alike in the Russian empire at the time of its destruction. Writers such as Yuri Chulkov or V. Ivanov wrote on this question, though often from a non-Christian viewpoint. Alexander Blok argued that solipsism is the result of modernism and nominalism as the ego severs man from reality.

The institutional setting that can best enhance this conception of freedom is one that is based on a Constituent assembly guaranteeing basic “negative” freedoms and transparent, independent courts. This is not so much an ideal of good government but an anarchist conception where the shrinkage of the state will lead, not to chaos, but to the development of strong communal ties that were not yet totally corroded in Russia at the time.

If freedom is the true end of the Christian life, then the ethical ideal of the church can be expressed like this:

Never treat the person as a means, but always as an end – this is the principle, which was proclaimed first by Christ, and then, many centuries later, by Kant. These are not empty words, but an absolute truth that contains much more than people think. It encapsulates a purely religious content in that it is connected with the idea of immortality. If a man is a transient phenomenon of the physical world, some combination of atoms constantly changing with age and finally changing into death, then death is nothing but an act of simple mechanical change one form to another. Here, not only can a person be treated as a means, he can be destroyed at will (Vol II, 247-247).

Kant's synthesis of earlier Enlightenment thought was that an act is truly ethical if it derives from an autonomous will. This is one, as mentioned already, that derives from a will, from a soul, that has no drives or passions working on it. To the extent that drives such as lust or

greed are interfering with the normal operation of the will, it is that much less free. As with political acts, these are legitimate only if they are autonomous: strikes and ideas that derive from a desire for revenge or hate are not legitimate and will soon show their true colors. If man is capable of this, then he has a soul that is spiritual and he is not merely a plaything of fate or causality. This also means that he is of infinite value since it contains an absolute end. A life at the level of an animal – the drives for nothing other than sex, money and power – reduce the actor to a non-human. Habitually and unreflectively, such a life can be determined to be totally unfree. Non-human animals exist as a part of a cosmic order that their instincts provide for the common good of all plant and animal life. It is a grand ecosystem where “communities” of matter interact synergistically.

For a man to do this is a perversion. It is a necessary (and perhaps sufficient) requirement of any tyranny. For one living at this level, of course, there would be no realization of tyranny, since its opposite would be unknown. St. Valentin's conception is that someone condemning a system for being “authoritarian” only works if autonomy is the ultimate end. To condemn a system in this way only because the agent is not able to exercise such power or that their passions are not being satisfied has no moral worth. Such an agent would, if given the right, rule in the same tyrannical way.

III.

For both capitalism and Leninist socialism, work and production are the only real variables of social life. Valentin writes concerning this obsession:

Overwork brings people to stupor, to the loss of all that is sacred in the human person; poverty and ignorance turns a man into an animal, pushing him to the tavern, to brothels, and into a mad frenzy of base passions. Wealth, on the other hand, destroys more people and more dulls the soul; it corrupts the heart and mind, awakens the animal lust and transforms man into something only semi-human, the state of most of our “natural leaders.” (Sventsitsky, 606-612)

Stalin instituted a six day week, eliminating Sunday, and forced labor to work practically each waking hour. This became the norm until his death, but that it was perfectly compatible with living in a “worker's paradise” shows that labor was not a concern for socialism. “The workers” was a non-existent ideal in a theory of the world that was not supposed to have ideals. Trotsky used the term for those supporting Jewish or communist goals. Hence, Armand Hammer was a “worker” while a poor Orthodox peasant is a “capitalist.” This justified the destruction of monasteries, Old Believer settlements and all other forms of idealist socialism. The socialist destroyed actual, functioning manifestations of socialism in order to build a socialist paradise.

If a group of men come to power concerned only with creating a state serving the workers, then all successful forms of non-alienated labor would not only be preserved, but seen as examples for future development. Part of my argument that Leninism had no interest in labor at all is shown by the destruction of all tried and true communal forms of non-alienated labor. The commune was replaced by the collective. The former was non-alienated, but it resisted the imposition of the party. The latter was the result of the former's destruction. It was not a community, it was a collective. The former is organic, the latter is mechanistic.

In this vein, he writes,

Christians should obey the authorities as long as long as they do not require anything contrary to God's commandments. If they demand some action that Christ has forbidden, you need to obey Christ, not the regime. . . If the king calls himself God, he violates the commandments of Christ. To accept this is a crime. Christian baptism is a betrothal to Christ and, as a result, must faithfully serve Christ (ibid)

It is shocking to read how, since Patriarch Sergius did nothing explicitly against the canons, he was a legitimate patriarch. Hence, by this line of reasoning, one can work with and for the destruction of the church and still be fully compliant with canon law. This might be an extreme example of legalism and its transformation into a totem, but it is a common and unsettling one. He writes to the clergy under the Reds:

Grace has abandoned you, you've abandoned your people. You've locked yourself in a warm house, indifferent to the people – you're pathetic, you're dead. You put expediency over truth and duty. The church is gone, you serve nothing. You've lost the power to discern the spirit and where it is. You've committed the worst sin: the church of Christ was entrusted to you and you gave it over to the Beast. You slavishly obey the world and its powers. The shepherd sits with the prosecutor, the representative of pagan power – the executioner – and is paid from the same funds that strangle the martyrs. . . this hideous union . . . (ibid)

Valentin was not merely reproaching the Red clerics, but he had the same harsh words to those serving the Petrograd bureaucracy as well. His harsh words are purely in tune with the prophets and is justified given the situation he is addressing. The fact that these clergy were claiming that they had “violated no canon” shows just how limited canonical analysis is.

“On the Program of the Volunteer Army” is a brief pamphlet for the masses. It is a reply to certain patriotic forces seeking the unity of a great Russia. While not rejecting this notion, he sees it as a means to cover over severe natural problems. He writes:

We cannot be a “United Russia,” while the population is subjugated to the power of autocratic commissioners from top and bottom;
There cannot be a single Russia with no civil liberty provided by law.
There can be no unified Russia when a single class of the population dreams of dictatorship over the rest;
There can not be a single Russia with no fair trials;
There is no unified Russia without protecting the fruits of honest labor. It is precisely this that is not protected. However, the massive conglomerates of the elite as considered “sacred”;
There can be no great Russia, until the family hearth is protected against rapists;
There can be no great Russia until every Russian citizen will not be granted the right to profess the Orthodox faith;
To ensure the solidity of civil liberties, the family as an untouchable sanctuary, and to protect the sacred rights of the Orthodox Church – Without these, there can be no unified Russia.
Our Volunteers raised the sword for the sake of a unified Russia. In our case, that

means that they came to the defense of trampled freedoms, dishonored the family and the persecuted Church! (Sventsitsky AB. Invisible Threads, Moscow 2009: 388-402).

There is no nationalism without socialism, there is no Christianity without social equality. Here, of course, we use “socialism” in the broadest sense, one, as St. Valentin states, is not statist but idealist and communal.

What does he mean? Any political vision that does not start from the group up is authoritarian and tyrannical in that it is unnatural. For the human conversation, our practical needs give birth to ideals, and these ideals give birth to the heights of cognition. This does not mean that these ideals are generated by utility, only that we discover them through necessity. The solution can only come from the parish.

He has a four part plan for the reconstruction of the Russian church that he lays out in his Open letter to the Bishops of the Russian Church. The first is the reconstruction of the parish. He writes:

The parish must become a living unit, living the full life of the Church and organically bringing together the clergy and the laity. To create this unity is necessary that the priest be not an alien, an unknown person appointed from a bureaucratic agency in distant St. Petersburg. Believers should have the right to elect from its own ranks their priests and deacons. . . . (1905, Vol II, 556-560)

Second, that the parish become an economic unit; a central economic part of the community. Priests should be maintained by the people themselves, not by the state. He is upset by some fees charged by rural priests (who at the time were very poor) that make them more “like salesmen and results in an almost universally hostile or contemptuous attitude to the clergy.”

Third, the parish must be tied to the commune and the local neighborhood. In Peter the Great's massive purge of the church, thousands of rural parishes were closed and others consolidated. Many parishioners were strangers to one another, very much like the situation in modernity. The goal is that “believers will become a single community living a collective life.”³ He says in addition that, as a result of this, “The multitude of believers will be one heart and one soul, and no property will be one's own, but all they will have in common; and there will be none in dire need since everything will be distributed according to the needs of each.”

Finally, that the royal priesthood of the laity needs to be stressed. Having the priesthood as a caste is a Roman Catholic doctrine coming from the Gregorian Reforms and is not part of the Orthodox life. Once the church is reformed on this basis, the monastics, white clergy and laity will be seen as equals, each with different functions rather than as forms of control. He summarizes his views like this:

The return of the church to the people is associated with the restoration of the true life of the parish. The church will heal from its [former] blindness: the land and society will again fall into its field of view and the Christian attitude will be restored. . . . The laity cannot be hierarchically organized as if they are a “lower”

3 The original reads: Из отдельных посетителей храма -- прихожан -- верующие станут единой общиной, живущей коллективной жизнью. I took only a portion of this.

part of the church, but the conciliar (соборным) consciousness of the church will be regained. The church must be a part of all aspects of life and must respond as the sobor, the true body of Christ, which bears in itself the mind of Christ. This answer is a new revelation, because the fullness of Christ's truth we do not have in ourselves, but the unity in life and mind (ibid).

This is very similar to Andrei, the bishop of Ufa, in his socialist view of a new Russia. Like Valentin, his vision is actively suppressed by western Orthodox people who fear any concern about oligarchy is tantamount to “socialism.” Valentin was arrested for these and other utterances of his, but was acquitted at the St. Petersburg Judicial Chamber on November 4 1906. There are many kinds of socialism, and it need not be the materialist, Judaic and Marxian sort. Regardless, fears about socialism have nothing to do with people spending millions on luxuries while the poor are down the street from them.

The “conciliar” consciousness of the church – sobornost' – is the understanding of the church and Christian society as a single organism taking into itself external form and inner content. These terms and boundaries are, at best, consequences of human sin and weakness. There is no “individual” and no “collective,” but a living community that makes room for both as synergistically interdependent. Rational and instinctive, ideal and real, thought and feeling, law and custom are all gathered into a single interdependent whole. It is the synthesis of the one and the many, but a synthesis that can only be brought about by self-sacrificing love. It is a function of grace, but is really the community of truly autonomous (not “free”) people as defined above.

IV.

The single most powerful work of social thought penned by Valentin was his rhetorically potent: “Letter to the Bourgeoisie.” It is so powerful that it will be reproduced in its entirety:

Your silk and gloss – your self-satisfaction and “refinement” of your external life hides the insane, miserable, mutilated soul. Its ugly claws clutch the ghoulish monster, the freak whose name is “Capital.” Your social life is full of servility, the clergy serve with their cardinals robes and diamond miters. . . In your churches, not a living soul.

Those remaining to protect their riches are dead – they are Pharisees. “Woe unto you that are rich! . . . Woe unto you that are full! . . . Woe unto you that laugh now!” However, since you have dropped your clown outfit and openly declared yourself the priests of the golden idol, you pretend still to hide behind the doctrine of Him who mercilessly unmasked and exposed your fraud of your perfidy! . . . It is precisely what you mock that you consider irreplaceable.

In Acts we read: “. . . the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul, and no one called anything his own, but all was held had in common. . . They sold their possessions and goods, and parted with them to all who had need.” Because of this, the Apostle continues, “There was no lack among them, those wealthy sold their goods, and the money they brought with them was more than sufficient for the needs of all (Acts 4). The Canons state explicitly that you are to “Divide everything with your brother and do not say you possess anything” (Canon 12 of the Apostles).

The lords of old divided the land into pieces, which are called “states,” and

began to kill each other, to take from some and add others. Inside the society which could feasibly feed tens of thousands of people, thousands starved; in huge states, the poor owned a few square yards. The worker was exploited and robbed while you, with this stolen money, bathe in luxury. Workers were herded underground where they suffocate and die physically and spiritually.

Insane, the elite's wealth is not enough, they continue to fight while truth and love are sacrificed. Property is the only 'sacred right' they recognize. As land was covered with cities lit up by electricity, connected by telegraphs, telephones and railways, for the common worker, the world is less and less open. Everyone keeps to himself like a beast in his den, hating all others without thinking about anybody or anything except what can be added to your possessions.

Wherever you lay your hands, death follows; the beautiful earth you filled with poison and corruption due to the "sacred right" of property. What of women? Freaks, forced into external standards of beauty, profaned her divine beauty, pierced ears and ridiculous hats; he's reduced to cuisine. You dare call your lust your love. You made her forget what the Lord has sent her, to forget her true beauty and genuine service. For the sake of your immature lust she distorts her body, while consciously or unconsciously directing everything from her dress to her smile so as to excite your lust.

Just look at the crowds at the theater, the most brilliant assemblage of the bourgeoisie. We shudder in horror and disgust: Mary's image of the Madonna is turned into a profane spectacle; finding pride and delight into pleasuring man. You've sacrificed the best creation of God as just another form of property; its crippled you, you've taken the image of the woman and trampled it into the mud of your lust while her mind, soul and heart you threw away. . .

Your whole life turned you into smug, heartless, bloodthirsty masters living in a continuous groaning hell. Yet, this is not enough to awaken you. Death itself will not do this. . . . The fear of eternity does not dispel your intoxication. At some point, you must, at least for a moment, break away from your shameful life and ask yourself "Why?" Yet, you won't.

Refusing to think of death, you then mercilessly mutilate, hack and furiously destroy life. You feel invincible as you have eliminated all impediments to your power: conscience, truth, compassion, and even the fear of death. But Christ is your most powerful enemy.

Your madness has no boundaries. You took possession of the church and instilled in her the same murderous spirit of possession and domination as the words of its representatives began to lull your conscience. Jesus' words were straight, endearing like thunder, but you have changed and corrupted the words of his servants, you have bought the church and, self-satisfied, reigned unchallenged!

Beware the cup of Yahweh's anger, today filled to the brim. Know that He's alive and you're his enemy. You can expel him from your life, but not his world. You could bribe your slaves to blaspheme His name to justify your criminal lust, but his true servants are still alive. You've disfigured the church and sought to alienate all from Christ. Know that your society – decayed from your own spirit of materialism, has generated the terrible force of socialism that you cannot resist – your days are numbered! The day is nearing when humanity casts

off your centuries-old yoke, and in this freedom, the true Church, united by love, pure and spotless, fiery as the spirit of the Apostles, the Church Holy, Catholic, Apostolic will rise. You know his servants await this day and await God's coming.

Now is the time of repentance. Lift up your spirit, end the chains of slavery, remove your lust and sever the “sacred” idol of property. Ananias and Sapphira withheld part of their property from the brethren of God and, at the accusation of St. Peter, they dropped dead.

This prophetic voice sounds today: Yes, you are going to die; you gave your heart to the power of death, and to the power of corruptible treasures of this world; you bowed to the terrible idol of capital. Closing your eyes from the true light, you die from the debauchery, the deadened people that your society creates; its desecration. creativity, desecrate life!

You will perish forever from spirit of slavery and lust! Shake off the dust from your feet; build anew. Build where love and joy abound, where there is true equality and true freedom. Go from death to life where all are brethren – seek Christ (Sventsitsky, Collected Works. Volume II, 2011: 361-407).

It seems harsh for St. Valentin to refer to the autocracy as an “abscess.” However, the “autocracy” is not identical with the crown. He is referring to the bureaucracy of Petrograd, not an Orthodox monarchy. He condemns the collecting of wealth and possessions so long as there is poor in the world. It reduces everything to money as the one, single standard of truth and reality – if money, then the passions. He will not permit the Judaic rationalization of moderns – capitalists do not deserve their immense wealth. What they receive they need to share with the Christian people. Worse, their own greed has infected all of society, leading to a materialism that created socialism. They created a monster.

They have destroyed the feminine. Hence, not only did their stupidity create socialism, but feminism as well. Since everything has been turned into a commodity and everything requires to be marketed to others, women have become whores. Indeed, whatever they touch, they destroy. Everything has been turned into a quantitative, money commodity and the desire for possession is the only socially acceptable vice. In a world where everyone seeks their own personal self-interest, those that already have power will use it against the common good. They will destroy.

V.

In 1907, St. Valentin wrote a letter that summarized his view of political society. Part of his letter reads:

It is obvious that the Church, the state, political parties, etc. have their own individual role in the Divine-human process and as it is obvious that the effective value of each of them should be assessed positively or negatively depending on what they represent: good or evil. That is why even exactly the same social phenomenon can be evaluated differently depending on the age. . . . The Christian view of progress is fundamentally different from the view of the positivist. While positive progress, merging with the concept of “evolution” argues for a slow and gradual achievement of The “general welfare” and is thus purely quantitative, the Christian idea has an internal process of differentiation

between good and evil, slowly being prepared for their final battle which ends with the victory of Good and transformation of all existence (From Volume II, 436-442).

This is a transcendent idea. The church is the expression of this Good that has already won in the mind of God, but not in human time. Valentin saw the world rapidly heading towards this final showdown, the condition that remains in effect in 2016. The two sides could not be more sharply delineated and their agendas anything but hidden. The Orthodox people are assured of a victory, but their own role in the war is a part of their own judgment. This is not the time for cowardice or excuses, it is a time to abandon all for Christ.

Works of St. Valentin in Russian
(All Translations Mine):
All are Available here (http://az.lib.ru/s/swencickij_w_p/)

The Christian Brotherhood and Its Program [1905]
To the Bishops of the Russian Church [1905]
On the Question of Church Reform [1905]
Appeal to Society [1905]
To the Troops [1905]
Seeking the City [1906]
An Open Letter to the Orthodox Faithful [1906]
The Christian Attitude to Power and Violence [1906]
What do the Peasants Need? [1906]
Appeal to the Members of the Church Council [1906]
Remain Free! [1906]
Terror and Immortality [1906]
The Excommunicated Emperor [1906]
Letter to the Bourgeoisie [1907]
The Truth about the Land [1907]
Sobor of the Dead [1907]
Prepare for the Sobor (Synod) [1907]
Religion and "Common Sense" [1907]
A New Religious Consciousness [1907]
A Revolution or a Rebellion? [1908]
Christians and the Upcoming Elections [1912]
Christianity and the "Sexual Question" [1912]
Should the Church "Engage in Politics?" [1919]
War and the Church [1919]
The Situation in Russia and the Problem of the Volunteer Army [1919]

These are all online reprints of Chertkov, SV (2010) The Collected Writings of Archpriest Valentin Sventsitsky in Two Volumes. (Moscow: Dar' Publishers)

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Appendix I
Appeal to the Troops
St. Valentin Svetsitsky, 1906
Translated by Matthew Raphael Johnson

There is a grace sin on your soul. The godless power has ordered you to torture and kill protesters. These are fellow Christians. You cannot say we were “just following orders” you must renounce them. The Apostles and martyrs say this is not excuse.

The Lord Jesus Christ commanded to love one another, and commanded us to pray for our enemies, as he prayed on the cross for those who had him crucified. Today, you kill not only your enemies in war, but also friends - workers and peasants in the towns and villages. You say that they are rebels and only have themselves to blame; you are forced to shoot and beat them. The peasants are taking bread from absentee landowners. They do not work, but work their peasants nearly to death. Almost all of you are farmers, you know how hard it is to live in the countryside, and in the factory. If these you shoot are guilty, do they earn a death sentence?

Remember how the soldiers wanted to take Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Are these peasants somehow guilty asking for bread? . . . Our rulers order this, and we are commanded to obey all authorities. Paul never said you need to obey the authorities more than God. You must obey the authorities so long as it does not require anything to God's will. . . Christ came to earth and now comes in the form of hungry and disgruntled people. You do not help them, you shoot them; you shoot at Christ. You renounce Him.

The Lord will reject you and say “As you did it to least of my people, you did it not to me.” Terrible, a great sin it is to kill people, regardless of their guilt. No one has power except God, to deprive a person of life. The king was blinded by his power and took the place of the King of Heaven. He tells you to violate the holy commandment “Thou shalt not kill” and tells you to kill Christians. You should not do this, you need not listen to superiors, if they require ungodly things; you should not help the king and the apostate (Svetsitsky, 1906, Vol II: 47-49).

Appendix II
The Excommunicated Emperor
St. Valentin Svetsitsky, 1906
Translated by Matthew Raphael Johnson

It was a long time ago, many centuries ago, that St. Ambrose excommunicated Emperor Theodosius. Here's how it happened:

The city of Thessaloniki was preparing for a local feast. Thessalonians favorite was the circus, especially the horse races. It so happened that the best rider, a favorite of the people, for some offense just shortly before the start of the festivities, was put into prison by the governor. The people demanded his release, but the authorities refused to extradite him. As a result, riots broke out, during which most of the government workers of the city were killed.

Emperor Theodosius was quick-tempered and believed his rule was “absolute,” was, without any investigation, ready to execute almost all the inhabitants of the city.

St. Ambrose was at the time, the bishop in Milan. He, with several other bishops, hastened to write a letter to the Emperor to prevent a massacre. The Emperor at first promised to act leniently, but soon reneged. Courtiers, dignitaries who surrounded his throne, the elite, depicted the events as part of a revolutionary movement; it was sedition and they incited the king

to give the cruelest punishment. The king was easily influenced by such talk.

When several thousand spectators packed the arena, his men suddenly locked the door and brought in loyal troops. They began an inhumane slaughter of unarmed men, neither sparing old men, nor women, nor children. . . .

The news of the bloody carnage spread throughout the country. All said such atrocities were not done even at the time of Julian the Apostate. They waited for the church to act. St. Ambrose learned about the wickedness of the emperor, left the city of Milan to his sister and from there wrote a letter to Theodosius saying:

“This massacre in Thessaloniki, has not been heard in the history of the world. I have warned you against it, and implored you; you yourself are aware of its cruelty; you are trying to cover this up and now I urge you to repentance...”

The Emperor ignored it, but when Ambrose returned to Milan, the king, as if nothing had happened, came to the cathedral. But the bishop met him on the threshold of the temple and said to him:

“We see, O king, that you do not repent of your infamous murder. Your imperial power darkened your mind and led you to sin. Take into account the dust from which you came. Do not let the purple close your eyes from the infirmity of your mortal body, that it covers. You sinned against thy neighbor, and we all have one Lord and King. How can you enter his temple? How can you pray with such blood or take Christ's body? Depart!”

The emperor replied “David sinned and was forgiven.”

Ambrose stated: “You followed him in his sins, so now you must follow him also in repentance.”

The Emperor accepted and for eight months did not dare come to church. The Christmas holiday came and yet again, Ambrose blocked the door. One of the imperial advisers implored Ambrose, but the bishop angrily rejected any talks with the sinful king's servant.

Finally the Emperor Theodosius humbly went to St. Ambrose and asked him to end his excommunication.

“How have you shown repentance?” asked Ambrose.

“Tell me what I should do, and I will do it” answered the emperor.

Ambrose told him to get up in the middle of the church as a simple penitent and repent of his sins in public. Emperor then took off his regalia and, in the midst of the church, kneeling in front of everyone, said: “My soul is only dust, Oh God, quicken me according to your word” So the emperor, having been excommunicated by the bishop, humbly repented before the people of his sins and was forgiven.

It was a long time ago (Sventsitsky, 1906, Vol II: 665-673)

