

Grave and reverend seniors joined in the commotion; respectable people danced on restaurant tables and deliberately threw the crockery about the room.

Delight in the creation of sheer noise is not confined to the half-intoxicated 'bean-feasters' of Whitechapel on Derby Day; at times it can overcome the so-called educated classes. The following is the description 'of bringing in the New Year in New York:—

The crowds on Broadway at midnight were colossal, and the noise was indescribable. The hubbub was augmented by a radio which transmitted the noise made in other towns. 'Liquor-drunk and money-drunk' is the phrase used by the *New York Tribune*. Vendors of cowbells, horns, and other noise-making instruments did a roaring trade at prices double those of last year.

Some critics would call this vulgarity; but healthy children love noise, and the nursery is its place: here we have an

atavistic return to the nursery or to the monkey-tree on a very large scale. Those who thus saw the New Year in, were still acting as children; when they became men they had not put away 'childish things.'

Just as under the placid surface of conventional morality and respectability the psychoanalyst tells us there are vast submerged complexes of immoral and criminal tendencies, so under the educated, civilized exterior of the adult man and woman of to-day there is a great substratum of pure childishness. 'Scratch the Russian and you find a Tartar'; but it does not require very much emotional scarification of the adult to reveal the unchanged child within. Just as the Great War undoubtedly brought to the surface much of the self-denial, heroism, and hardihood fortunately still latent in many men and women, so certain times of peculiar stress may reveal the not very deeply hidden childishness that lurks in the mental make-up of most of us.

## RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS IN RUSSIA

### SUMMARY OF A PRIVATE LETTER

[The following article is summarized from a translation of an unsigned letter by a responsible Russian, whose identity it is necessary to keep secret for his own safety, published in *Put*, or 'The Way,' a Russian religious journal established in Paris last year and edited by a distinguished group of Russian Christian scholars.]

THE Russian Church is now passing through a period of expiring perse-

cution. Passionate class-hatred has abated somewhat, and an acute but equally passionate craving for pleasure not restrained by religious or social claims has come to the fore. Pilfering of private and State revenues by those in authority, betrayal of their true convictions by the intellectuals, depravity in the younger generation, gross materialism in the masses, the negation of Church, God, and any form of religion, characterize our present society

— a society that is perfectly heathen in its new way. And arraigned against these conditions we see the Church, weakened in numbers, but strengthened by the fires of persecution.

Our antireligious Government has evidently relinquished the intention of destroying the Church by physical violence. The Church has proved stronger than her persecutors, who find themselves obliged to make concessions to the masses, who still value the Church and will not give her up. Priests are no longer executed, and religious worship is subjected to few restrictions. This does not mean that it is quite free. Church processions are still forbidden, and church buildings are closed from time to time, 'by the demand of the working classes.' At present, when almost daily trains carry hundreds of exiled students, soldiers, merchants, intellectuals, and even Marxists and Zionists, to Siberia, it would be strange if priests as well were not exiled. But already many bishops and priests, having finished their term of 'punishment,' are returning to their former dioceses and parishes. They have come back to strengthen the vacillating and to gather together the faithful, bringing with them a spirit of dauntless loyalty to the Church.

Our Communist authorities still regard their struggle against God as one of their chief objectives, but they prefer to kill the spirit, not the body. They do this in the schools, in literature, in official atheistic publications, in the theatre. Their advantage lies in their remarkably extensive propaganda organization and their complete control of all cultural institutions. To scoff at things sacred is still looked upon as proof of political enlightenment, but the disgusting public processions of the *Comsomol* are recognized as harmful, and the authorities are trying to suppress these hooligans. The desecration

of graves and cemeteries is no longer encouraged; and Bukharin himself recently declared in a public address: 'Let no one think that because he defiles the doorstep of a priest he is leading in antireligious propaganda.'

The so-called 'Living,' or Sovietized, section of the Church no longer troubles us as it did at first. Its leaders have failed to enlist either the support of the masses or the sympathy of the idealists. The former resist them with their ritualistic conservatism; the latter can forgive neither the blood they have spilled nor their friendship with the godless. But few church buildings are in their hands, — although cathedrals in the capital and the provincial towns have been turned over to them, — and those they possess are empty. The only sections of the clergy that have allied themselves with this movement are those who seek selfish advancement or those who are too frightened and cowed to have a will of their own; the only laymen who attend their services are those who are too indolent to change their parish and simply go to the church nearest their homes, consoling themselves with the idea that disputes between the clergy are no concern of theirs. Moreover, services in the Soviet Church for the most part follow the old ritual, and its priests as a rule do not preach revolution, but merely obedience to the authorities, 'who are from God.' In other words, the Living Church is not in essence revolutionary, but a revival of the old State Church of Tsarist days, with its unprincipled, bureaucratic spirit.

I believe the Soviet Government feels reassured in certain respects regarding the Russian Church as a whole. It no longer fears plots among the clergy or political propaganda from the pulpit. Furthermore, the Church's present abstention from politics is more than precautionary and tactical. It is due to

her complete absorption in spiritual questions. Suffering and persecution produce an ascetic and mystical exaltation that lifts men out of their material and political cares. They are ready to commit the salvation of the fatherland to the hands of God. Our revolution and social reforms are so complex that no one can accept or refute them en bloc. Among the ranks of the faithful are many who fought in the Red Army. The White and the Red meet in church over the same sacramental cup. Consequently the Church is wise in refraining from reopening the fresh wounds of political passion.

But the Church's passive acceptance of Soviet rule in no wise denotes indifference to the Communist idea. She combats steadfastly Communist ideology and ethics; but the sharp point of the spiritual sword is directed, not against the political party ruling Russia, but against the spirit inculcated by that party.

So we see the Church emerging victorious from a period of persecution and schism. There can be no doubt of that. But what are the fruits of this victory? Is the Church increasing in numbers while she grows purer and stronger? Among what social classes does she find most of her adherents?

Now as formerly the Church is the national sanctuary. Everywhere else Russia is still divided by insurmountable class-barriers. Outwardly the appearance of our congregations has changed. The poorly clad peasant masses no longer fill our temples. In the cities a majority of those attending service are intellectuals. These are of very different types and have been brought to the Church in many different ways. Some find in her arms consolation for their bereavement; some a shelter for their wounded love of country. Others, the young and hopeful, are not driven to her by sorrow and

suffering, but are attracted by the hope and promise for Russia's future that the Church affords them. Many of our clergymen and bishops now come from the ranks of the laymen. It would be an exaggeration to say that the intellectuals outnumber the others, but they are a very considerable fraction of our congregations. Many workmen attend the suburban churches, as do many tradesmen. These have changed less in outward appearance than the other classes.

And what of their numbers? They are very large, but it is difficult to say whether they form a minority or a majority of the nation. We have no accurate statistics, and can judge only by the size of our congregations. Our churches are filled, but not to overflowing. When we consider that the edifices turned over to the 'Living Church' are practically empty, it would appear that the total attendance is smaller than before the Revolution. Neither is it increasing rapidly. The terrible years of 1917-1920 were a period of religious revival. Since then conversions have been less frequent. Among the city poor the Baptists and different sects of 'Brethren' find many new adherents. The simplicity of their moral preaching and the strictness of their personal lives attract many. Among the cultured, the old infatuation for Tolstoi, theosophy, and even for Roman Catholicism, has vanished. The Orthodox Church has rallied to it practically all the truly religious-minded among our intellectuals. One consolation is that we have no more 'dead leaves,' as Tiutcheff used to call them. None among us attends in order 'to do the proper thing,' or 'to stand well in the community.' On the contrary, some are prevented from attending because they hold official positions.

In the villages we witness a different

picture — although our knowledge of conditions there is far less general. We can judge only from what we see in villages near a railway, and consequently more or less influenced by city manners. Unquestionably Russia still has a great number of secluded communities where conditions remain practically what they have been for centuries. The first thing we notice in the villages, however, is that the churches are nearly empty. As a rule, only women and old men attend service. The youth have imbibed the teaching of atheism. The middle-aged who have come back from the war, after traveling far and wide over the world, have brought with them a large dose of skepticism, or at least religious indifference. Occasionally we discover a village that is being treated to 'a course of enlightenment' by the Soviet authorities. But it takes to this without much enthusiasm. The sound common-sense of our peasants makes them incurably suspicious of all kinds of theories, which have so much attraction for our city laborers. Nevertheless, this propaganda undermines the old faith. So the peasant is preoccupied just now with what he considers practical things. He has become intensely interested in the cultivation of the soil. He has lost the feeling of mystery that formerly surrounded his conceptions of agriculture. But he has a conservative instinct that makes him want to keep the Church as a ritualistic institution. Girls rarely consent to marry without a religious ceremony. Children are still baptized; the burial service is read; the traditional festivals are observed.

As a rule, the village clergy have not passed through the purifying fire of persecution. They remain timid and oppressed, not much above their fellow-villagers in culture and education. Materially they have lost some of their revenues, but the village still gives

them enough to live upon, — in any case more than the school-teachers.

The layman's influence in church matters has increased. The Bolshevist law separating Church and State turned the churches over to parish committees of twenty elected representatives. They keep the church building in repair, call and dismiss pastors, and exercise the fullest rights of congregational autonomy. Rarely does a bishop venture to interfere in a parish election. Consequently the priest's hold on his parish is entirely dependent on his moral and religious authority. Even matters of ritual are often taken out of his hands by the laymen. The parish committee determines whether the building is to belong to the Living or to the Patriarchal Church, whether the preaching is to be 'extreme' or moderate. As a rule, the laymen are conservative. A priest passing over to the Living Church is nearly always obliged to manoeuvre so as to abolish the old committee and secure the election of a new one; but this usually results in an empty church and the break-up of the parish.

While years of persecution have weakened the outward unity and solidarity of the Church, and for a time the only direction she received was from the Holy Spirit abiding in her, her unity has been most marvelously preserved. Among the spiritual fruits of this period, one, I think, is visible to all. We have witnessed a remarkable outward improvement of divine service. It now possesses a severe beauty that could not formerly be found. Never before has it been performed in so solemn and spiritual a manner. . . . In nearly all, even of the smallest churches, there are beautiful choirs. The faithful are loath to quit the temple. They love the long services, sometimes lasting on festal days for five hours. In a few cases, though this is

with great circumspection, new prayers have been introduced into the ritual. . . .

The monastic idea, which a short time ago seemed to belong to the past ages, is again growing popular. Not all monasteries have been closed. Here and there they still exist under the name of 'laboring communities,' some even in the capital itself. Others have been converted into institutions where aged cripples and invalids are allowed to pass the remainder of their lives as custodians and keepers of sacred objects and relics that have been declared to be objects of art worthy of preservation by the existing Government. These monasteries attract many, but monastic life is to-day possible for only a few. So the ascetic ideal seeks for a new outlet, which is found by uniting in lay communities while still living the life of the world. These groups keep in close touch with the Church and are under the guidance of the clergy.

Another institution that shows great vitality is the old custom of resorting to aged and particularly venerated monks famous for saintliness and spiritual gifts, for counsel and leadership. Most of these *startsy* are connected with monasteries, but sometimes a parish priest famous for his ascetic life and deep spiritual insight acquires that position. Not infrequently he is a priest deprived of his parish by the Soviet authorities. Such men wield great influence over large numbers of people. These non-monastic *startsy* occupy rather the place of father confessors to their followers. Their influence, which is more widespread than formerly, must

be regarded as a new feature of Russian life. . . .

Christian thought suffers from severe oppression more than Christian life. The Word is in fetters, intercourse between individuals very limited. We know that many write without any hope that they will see their books published. This gives an exclusive importance to oral teaching. The pulpit, also bound by official fetters, cannot satisfy the great demand, though it has given birth to many remarkable preachers. Among them we witness the tendencies of which we have already spoken as existing in the whole Church — ethical questions and questions regarding apologetics are the prevalent ones. The vacancy that cannot be filled by public speech is often satisfied by private conversation. At the present moment it has reached in Russia a very high degree of intensity. It often manifests itself by prayers in common; the absence of scientific organization is supplemented by the intensity of religious fervor. In such an atmosphere even abstract differences of opinion and theoretical disputes — very hot sometimes — do not generally produce any ill-feeling, any inner separation; do not stand in the way of a brotherly communion between people of very different points of view. Life in the midst of a Church that is persecuted, life in the midst of Christ's enemies, face to face with schism, constant communion in the same divine service and in the sacraments — all this produces a feeling of great unity even among those following different tendencies and possessing different religious opinions.

## 'WOG'<sup>1</sup>

BY T. EARLE WELBY

THE poets are fortunate; they can express the most intimate of their experiences, and yet keep their secrets. We others, who work in prose, how can we avoid making ourselves a motley to the view? It does not lessen our embarrassment if the love we would express is not for a human being; to write of one's love for a dog is, almost inevitably, to get oneself relegated to the category of foolish sentimentalists. Yet what kind of love can it be that will not take the risks incidental to expression? 'Say it with flowers,' the florist's sign exhorts us. 'Say it with bones,' to the dog; and I endeavor to do so; but there remain things hardly to be said in that medium. True, I might talk to him, as I do, and leave it at that. But if you are accustomed to being in print, you seem hardly to have said a thing till it is in print. Besides, since he cannot understand more than my general intention when I speak to him, I am almost bound to address what I would say of him to people who can, and a few of whom, initiates, perhaps will.

His name is 'Wog,' though, like the dog in the classic advertisement, he 'answers, reluctantly, to "d—— you, come here."' He is a wire-haired terrier, old style. He is two and a half years old, with a genius for remaining a puppy. Abandoning no game of his infancy, he has given up only one habit, that of putting himself in the corner when scolded. As a puppy, at the first word of reprimand he would retreat to

the nearest corner, push his face against the angle of the walls, and remain there, only now and then turning a ludicrously woebegone visage over his shoulder, till some word of forgiveness was spoken to him. So comic was the exaggeration of sorrow in his expression that, I fear, we sometimes delayed pardon a few moments for the amusement of the spectacle. Alas, there is a lamentable truth in that masterpiece of the Marquis de Sade: "*O monsieur, il est donc possible qu'on puisse prendre du plaisir à voir souffrir?*" "*Tu le vois,*" *lui répondait cet homme immoral.*" I am glad he outgrew that penitential trick at six months.

All other usages of his extreme youth he has retained, and notably a certain method of dealing with temporary superfluous bones. These, since it is his fate and mine to live on a very high level, without access to a private garden or yard, he can cover with none but imaginary dust. But he has imagination. The bone being deposited in the centre of the carpet, he circles round it, without haste, without rest, his nose shoveling on to it the dust that, as Walter Pater said of a possibly more important desideratum, is either not there at all or not there in any satisfying measure. After some five minutes the bone is, by convention, hidden. Both the high contracting parties observe the convention strictly: he takes no notice of the hypothetically concealed bone, glare it never so whitely, and I walk over it as though it were under a great mound of dust. Once

<sup>1</sup> From the *Saturday Review* (London Baldwin-Conservative weekly), February 6