

ORTHODOX UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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In the XIX–XX centuries materialist philosophy (which is particularly true for Marxism) took serious and profound attempt to explain the process of social development, based mainly on objective economic factors. Therefore, in modern history and sociology the spirit of «economic prerequisites» prevailed everywhere for a long time in assessing the driving forces of society, and the psychological and spiritual elements that are so important for the rational activity of such a thinking being as a man were, to a considerable extent, missed. But in practice this concept proved to be a historical inconsistency. Life itself forced to change the vector of the search of the causes and patterns of development of the society from the primary analysis of the economic realities to the spiritual side of life. That is why we are considering St. Augustine and St. Symeon Christian concepts of historical development of society. However, in our times it requires a philosophical interpretation and explaining which we find in the works of theologians of the Middle Ages.

Keywords: «The City of God», «The City of Man», «Church», «Anti-church», «Morality»

St. Augustine (354–430). The western Father of the Church, philosopher and theologian St. Augustine was the first to suggest the idealistic interpretation of history. He from the standpoint of moral progress described the metaphysics of historical forces, in his famous book «The City of God», the idea that the «two cities» later became the archetypal for the Christian world. The idea is that in everyday life the «City of God» and «City of the man» confront each other as a system of values and anti-values. Their opposition is of the spiritual and moral character that defines all the other differences, including economic and political ones, and as well as the historical development of society. The human race, according to St. Augustine is divided into two categories – people who live for themselves and those who live for God.

Why do people join these two opposing camps and fight against each other, causing the dramatic nature of the historical process? There are dialectically both objective and subjective reasons for that. The Lord Jesus Christ in the parable of «the sower» refers to an objective factor. He explains that humanity is governed by the laws of divine providence, and is divided into two kinds. The primary cause of the formation of two human communities living together in a single field of life, is the activity of two sowers of the Good (God), sowing «good seed in his field», and the evil (the devil), the enemy of the human, sowing tares among the wheat [2, Mat. 13: 24–30].

St. Augustine develops this idea of the gospel. He sees the cause of the appearance of two Cities in the subjective moment in the presence of two kinds of love. He writes: «So, two Cities were created by two kinds of love – love for themselves, leading to the contempt of God and heavenly love, leading to the self-contempt» [1, p. 66].

Representatives of the «City of man» are trying to be maximally self-asserted. The be-

havior of these people is entirely determined by the thought of their own benefit. Individuals always put their interests above the interests of others and tend to dominate them. This explains the type of society where individualism flourishes.

The People of «City of God», see the foundation of their life in God, mutually serve one another in love. There appears a harmonious society of consensus and unanimity. The opposite social morality and spiritual aspirations of these communities lead to spiritual contradiction and conflict, for the first want by all means to get comfortable in this life, and the latter take the blessings of this life only what they need, patiently waiting for the future of eternal bliss.

St. Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022). In the XI century Byzantine ascetic, poet, philosopher, theologian and the greatest mystic of the Orthodox East Church St. Symeon the New Theologian adopted the idea of two Cities and developed it in his own way as a doctrine of the Church of Christ and the Church of Satan, or «the Church of evil-doers». He understands the Church as a community of people, the «sons of God», connected by the grace of the Holy Spirit, by faith, hope, and love in Christ in a living organism in the «body of Christ», and not just in some social, political or economic organization. In this mystical body Christ – «is the head of the body, of church», and people – parts of this body. Some people are in the rank of hands, others in the rank of shoulders, the chest, the heart, and leg and bones. Every person in the church, along with others perform their special mission. However, the main goal for everybody is the spiritual transformation of man and the whole world.

St. Simeon clearly understands that God (the second Person of the Trinity – God the Son or the Logos) became incarnate, became man, redeemed by suffering on the cross people's sins and made his Church. Thus He laid the

objective conditions of salvation on a cosmic scale. But these objective conditions of salvation must be supplemented by subjective efforts of people, for salvation is not automatic. All should be a synergy or the complementarity of God's grace and human activity. Based on the redemptive mission of Christ and on the conscious self-determination of man appears City of God, the Church of Saints

This City of God lives in history, goes through certain stages of development. Formation of the New Testament Church – the perfect society – began on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire descended upon the Apostles, ontologically changed them and spiritually united in a single divine-human organism. In this initial period, the members of the Church were unanimous. And the multitude of believers «were of one heart and one soul» [2, Acts 4: 32]. And therefore they «were together and had all things in common» [2, Acts 2: 44]. This period can be called «the Easter period in the Church». However, with the development of sin, the Church enters its second phase – Cross or persecution, suffering and martyrdom, which will end only with the help of God at the end of history during the Last Judgment.

However, the objective circumstances of life, a distinct set of social relations, moral indifference or free will can lead a person to the city, the ontological foundation of which is the former archangel Lucifer who rebelled against God and lost his angelic dignity, but not the mind, and strength. – «He is world holder and plays with the world like with a little bird» [3, Word 67, Cat. 23]. For «no one on earth is like him: He it is made without fear. He is king over all the children of pride» [2, Job 41: 25].

Because of the tyranny of the devil, its graceless kingdom is being created and is becoming stronger. As antipode to the City of God antichurch or «body of Satan» that connects people through a network of some kind of interpersonal relationships is being created. The basis of this relationship is lecherous and perverted love – the most massive and obvious enemies of the Holy Spirit. According to apostle Paul, «Do you not know that your bodies are member of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For «The two», He says, «shell become one flesh». But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him» [2, I Cor. 6: 16–17].

So, if the Church's life is defined by Christ and filled with grace, love, light, joy, freedom, creativity, the antichurch is ruled by the fallen angel, Satan and by sins and passions perverting human life. Although in real life it is diffi-

cult to separate one community from the other, the clash between two communities is inevitable. Life turns into an endless spiritual warfare between the Church of Christ and the Church of Satan.

This spiritual warfare requires its philosophical interpretation. Therefore, demonology is given so much attention from theologians or philosophers who understand that there is no spiritual perfection and knowledge of God is impossible, if we don't taken into account the fact of this struggle. Christians in this war should understand with whom and how they fight. Ap. Paul explains that, «For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places» [2, Eph 6: 12].

St. Symeon the New Theologian knows about this war not by hearsay. On the basis of his personal mystical experience, he points to the fact that this war can not be negotiated. It is eternal and uncompromising. The philosopher believes that the devil is cunning ancient warrior, fighting against people in different ways.

First of all, the tempter suggests the idea to people that he does not exist, that they always live by own will, then he is trying to impose on the people a false kind of world views (atheism, heresy, various philosophical systems) based on the wisdom of this world.

Satan also tempts by the apparent beauty of the human world, trying to replace the spiritual life by material, sensual.

Finally, the devil sometimes has a direct effect on people, he intimidates, suppresses their will, inspires lust, and induces insanity, because of which people lose their critical perception of life become sad, depressed, and degraded.

Through all of these tricks the devil, as a skillful hunter, catches people as a bird catcher birds, fisher fish with a net. This is a net of gluttony, avarice, lust, vanity, pride, and other passions. Sometimes people became devil warrior, master of evil.

As a result of sinful way of life, a person is deprived of divine grace, begins to change spiritually, changes his divine prototype to the image of a fallen spirit. In the process of spiritual degradation spiritual death is the end point of the moral fall of man. Thus, according to the St. Symeon the New Theologian, many people are dead before physical death. Their souls are in hell for a long time, and bodies drag out a miserable existence on earth. This theme will be developed later by Dante Alighieri. During a trip to the underworld where he meets his friend Alberigo, who in spring 1300 was still alive. There is a conversation between them from which the poet discovers that the soul of

his friend had long left his body, and his body on the earth is already occupied by the demon.

Summary. In this context, however, the question disturbing everybody arises: «Is our salvation ensured by the this real historic church»? Well, yes and no. The fact is that, according to St. Augustine and St. Symeon the New Theologian, not all people who are part of the Church in the Sacrament of Baptism for a variety of reasons, were not born to a new life and spiritually where not renewed. They are «abortions, not knowing who gave birth to them» [4, Himn 46, (50)]. And many people, even if they were born again thanks to Christening did not become real children of the Father. Therefore, in the historical Church one can meet the righteous and the wicked. Sins sometimes prevail even among Christian nations. St. Symeon the New Theologian assessed critically the moral conditions of the Christian society at the turn of the millennia

saying about the general decline of the spiritual and moral life of the Church. Now, in the XXI century, the situation became even more complicated and worse. The fact is that today the struggle between the two cities, between traditional and non-traditional moral values reached the maximum intensity and entered the final stage. Before our eyes, there appeared a special society, Babylon, which completes the historical process. St. Apostle and Evangelist John says about it in the Apocalypse [2].

References

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